METRO / A17
1 killed, 3 hurt in MMDA clearing operations in Baclaran Muslim community

WORLD / A20
Exultant Democrats take control of Congress, elect first woman speaker

BUSINESS / B1
Forex reserves hit all-time high of $23B boosted by OFW inflows

NEWS / A2
Bomb explodes near restaurant in Cotabato City, three injured

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Saturday, January 6, 2007 ★★ 6 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 29 P18 inquirer.inquirer.net

Bishops give scathing review to best picture

By Christine V. Esguerra and Bayani San Diego Jr.

GRAMLESS... AND TASTE... recently shortlisted.

It's not a catchy tagline for a movie. It's a review of "Enteng Kabisote 3," top winner and chosen best picture

BISHOPS A6

Palace now dead set to kill VFA commission

By TJ Burgonio

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO IS NOW dead set on abolishing the Presidential Commission on the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA-Com) immediately after its executive director assisted Malacañang's handing over to the US Embassy custody of convicted rapist US Marine Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith, according to activists

PALACE MOVES A6

US balks at VFA review

Revisiting RP-US accord premature, says embassy

By TJ Burgonio and Volt Contreras

MALACAÑANG MAY HAVE ANNOUNCED ITS "RESOLVE" to review the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement as a result of what it called "good lessons" learned from the Subic rape case, but the US Embassy yesterday signaled reluctance to agree to such an endeavor in the foreseeable future.

"We think that [a review] is premature due to the current case still pending in the Philippine judicial system," embassy spokesperson Matthew Lussenhop said in an apparent reference to the appeal of convicted rapist Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith of the US Marines.

At any rate, the embassy has yet to receive a formal communication from the Philippine government regarding a proposed review of the agreement, Lussenhop said.

"No dialogue or renegotiation is taking place," he stressed.

But he added: "We do consult [with Philippine counterparts] regularly and often regarding the interpretation and implementation of the VFA."

Asked what the embassy would consider an appropriate time for a review, Lussenhop said: "We cannot speculate on when, how, and in what manner [that step will be taken]."

Malacañang itself, through Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, did not set a timetable for the planned review of the 1999 agreement governing the conduct of visiting US troops.

The agreement had of late generated much controversy because of the custody dispute involving Smith, 21, who was convicted of raping a Filipino woman while on shore leave at the Subic Bay Freeport in November 2005.

According to Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, the United States cannot readily reject any future request for review of the VFA.

Santiago, chair of the Bicameral Legislative Oversight Committee on the VFA (Lowfo), said that in the event the Department of Foreign Affairs sent a note verbale requesting a review based on a Congress resolution, the US government could not "simply reject the request off hand."

"In the end, it will boil down to an either-or proposition. They needs to a review or we will terminate it," she said in a phone interview.

A US rejection of any request for review would mean that "it does not give due consideration to the evolving perspective of Filipinos concerning the treaty," said the senator, who also chairs the Senate committee on foreign relations.

"The plausible reaction is that will be to terminate the treaty," the said of the agreement ratified by the Philippine Senate.

US BACKS A6

LISTEN UP And the generals do as their commander-in-chief talks to them during Ms Arroyo's New Year's traditional call on the joint Department of National Defense and the Armed Forces of the Philippines at Camp Aguinaldo. From left, AFP Chief of Staff Hermogenes Esperon, Army chief Lt. Gen. Romeo Tolentino, Gen. Pedrito Cadungog and Air Force chief Gen. Jose Reyes.

₱10-B bonanza for AFP modernization

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Dona Pazzibugan

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO HAS vowed to crush all armed threats to the country by 2010 by beefing up the Armed Forces' battlefield skills with a spending bonanza of ₱10 billion this year.

The President's traditional New Year call on the military top brass in their Camp Aguinaldo headquarters yesterday became a pre-procurement conference to finalize the shopping list of 14 major items to be bid out next week.

"The pre-procurement conference was the first step in the process of procuring ₱10 billion worth of equipment for the modernization," she later told soldiers.

A beaming AFP chief Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. emerged from the conference, announcing that the contracts had been approved "in record time, in just one day. Suddenly, we are seeking ₱10 billion worth of equipment."

He said it helped that the President was also the acting defense secretary, having taken over the defense portfolio temporarily after her trusted adviser Avelino Cruz Jr. resigned last November

P10-B BONANZA A6

New York City hails 'Subway Superman'

NEW YORK—A NEW YORKER dubbed "Subway Superman" received the city's highest civic award on Thursday after pinning down a stricken stranger on subway tracks just enough to allow an oncoming train to run over the top of them.

Wesley Autrey, 50, jumped onto the subway tracks at a station in Manhattan's Harlem neighborhood on Tuesday to help Cameron Hollopeter, a 19-year-old film student who had suffered a seizure and fallen.

Autrey held down Hollopeter's convulsing body in the track bed as the train passed just centimeters above them. Both were uninjured, but Hollopeter, of Lirdeon, Massachusetts, remains in hospital undergoing tests to discover what caused his seizure.

Autrey, whose knitted cap was brushed with grease and dirt from the train passing overhead, played down his daring act as he accepted the Bronze Medallion—for exceptional citizenship and outstanding achievement—from New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

Autrey is "a great man—a man who makes us all proud to be New Yorkers," said the mayor.

Autrey then again provided details of his heroism to the media gathered at City Hall.

Autrey was standing on the platform with his daughters and scores of other subway riders when he saw

NEW YORK A6

May election Round 3 of Gloria vs Erap fight

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE PALACE IS BILLING THE senatorial polls in May as Round 3 of the continuing battle between the forces of President Macapagal-Arroyo and her deposed predecessor, Joseph Estrada.

Michael Defensor, the President's chief of staff, yesterday said it had yet to be seen who would win in the third showdown. Ms Arroyo's senatorial slate swamped the Estrada team in 2001 and scored out the opposition in 2004.

"It's too early to say what our chances are, but we are confident that once the public realizes that this is all about Arroyo and Estrada, it would understand the issues more and not be carried away by the anti-GMA rhetoric," he told the Inquirer.

Despite being under house arrest for the past six years, Estrada remains the opposition's kingmaker, Defensor said.

He said this was why the May polls would be fought along the same lines as the last two elections.

MAY ELECTION A6

FEASTING ON PDI. Cyrus David R. Duka, 5 months old, "literally interprets Francis Bacon's words that 'some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested. Cyrus has chosen to taste the best newspaper in the land." Not our words but those of his father, lawyer and doctor in education Cecile D. Duka who also contributed these photos. Thank you, guys, you made our new year.

RP geologists rock, mines study shows

By DJ Yap

FILIPINOS CAN REALLY DIG IT.

For the past two decades, Filipino geologists have contributed to the discovery of 40 of the world's major mines, accounting for nearly $580 billion (₱24.4 trillion) worth of gold and copper, according to a recent study.

A geoscientist studies any one of the sciences, such as geology or geochemistry, that deals with the earth.

"At least 69 Filipino geoscientists, mostly still active but a few have retired or passed away, have contributed to 40 copper-gold discoveries worldwide since 1980," the study titled "Impact of Filipino Geoscientists in the Minerals Industry" reported.

"These 40 discoveries comprise an estimated global mineral resource of about 68 million tons of copper metal and 3,447 tons of gold for a total value of $400 bil-

RP GEOLOGISTS A7

Terror alert, yes but no rain to ruin Asean parade

By Volt Contreras and Gil Cabacungan Jr.

THEY ARE MAKING SURE THE heavens will cooperate this time.

A local organizer of the rescheduled 12th Summit of Leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations has confidently declared that "fair weather" will prevail over Cebu province during next week's meet, based on an official forecast he had obtained.

According to Foreign Affairs Assistant Secretary Luis Cruz, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) based its reading on the record of "average weather" in January "since 1949."

"I've gone one step ahead and got a report from Pagasa two days ago that there will be fair weather next week in Cebu," replied Cruz when asked about more warnings.

The rescheduled summit will now be held from Jan. 14 to 15 and the government has confirmed that all 16 heads of state and government of Asean and its dialogue partners will attend.

The government's official line for the postponement of the annual summit of leaders of the 10-member Asean and their six East Asian dialogue partners, originally scheduled for Dec. 10 to 14, was the threat of typhoon "Seniang" which caused Cebu airport

However, many saw the real reason was the warnings of a possible terror attack on the Central Visayan province issued by Canada, Britain, Australia and the United States.

Yesterday, Canada, Britain and Australia were still warning their citizens against a possible terror attack on the Philippines days before the arrival of Asian leaders for the rescheduled summit, their embassies said yesterday.

The exact reasons for the renewed warnings are unclear although a nationwide manhunt has been ordered for a Vietnamese-American "terrorist" who allegedly tried to bomb the Vietnamese embassy in Manila. (See related story on Page A8.)

TERRORALERT A8

3 injured in Cotabato bomb blast

By Edwin Fernandez, Charlie Señaco and Jeoffrey Maitem
Inquirer Mindanao

COTABATO CITY—A HOMEMADE BOMB HIDDEN IN A CARTON box exploded near a fast food restaurant along Makakua St. here around 11 a.m. yesterday, injuring three people, including a village official from Maguindanao.

Authorities blamed the bombings on the Abu Sayyaf, a bandit group with links to the Jemaah Islamiyah regional terror network, after it received reports last week that militants would carry out attacks in retaliation for the charges filed against two suspected Indonesian militants.

Three improvised bombs were placed in a box and left on a road outside the restaurant, regional police Chief Superintendent Erwinan Dotta said separate, daily one was off.

"Before the explosion, we were receiving intelligence reports of a possible attack in the city," Dotta said.

Two more bombs were recovered near the blast site.

One of the victims, Alex Tiro, a village official of Dalton in Barangay, was critically injured because he was near the site of the explosion.

Two people were wounded in the legs and treated in a hospital, officials said.

A witness said he saw a man place the box on the sidewalk and hurriedly left the area.

Senior Insp. Samson Obang, city police spokesperson, said they suspected members of the Abu Sayyaf and the JI could be behind the attack.

"We have intercepted a report that they will carry out attacks in major cities in Mindanao, including our city," Obang said reporters, adding the make and type of explosive device were similar to previous bombs unveiled by the militants.

The area where the explosion occurred was normally a busy street because it is where many commercial establishments in the city are found.

"It's lucky that only a few were hurt and no one was killed," he said.

Obang said the bomb that exploded near H&P Refreshment Bar was fashioned out of a 60 millimeter mortar shell and was remotely detonated.

Cotabato police chief Superintendent Pedro Mercado said investigators recovered three sets of mortar fins as well as shattered and burnt parts of a cell phone, leading them to believe the device was triggered remotely using the mobile phone.

He said the blast shattered the restaurant's windows and those of two vehicles parked nearby.

On Dec. 29, a government prosecutor filed charges against Indonesian bombers Dulmatin and Omar Patek for the Dec. 30 blasts in Makilala, North Cotabato which killed at least eight people. Aside from Patek and Dulmatin, 23 members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) were also charged.

Responses: City Prosecutor Al Collins said he found strong evidence that these charged were responsible for the attack in Makilala, which also wounded 20 others.

Prior to the filing of charges, three civilians were injured when alleged JI operatives bombed a mall in Tacurong City in Sultan Kudarat province.

Last October, an improvised bomb near a shopping mall in downtown Cotabato City damaged property but no one was wounded.

JI, a regional terror network linked to Indonesia which has links to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network, has been tagged as a terrorist organization by Washington and other foreign governments because of its involvement in deadly bombings across the region.

Those included the Bali blasts that killed more than 200 people, mostly Australians.

The JI is allied with the Abu Sayyaf group, which is said to be harboring Nur al Dulmatin.

Last month, the military said an informant had been in a jungle grove on Jolo where he claimed Abu Sayyaf chieftain Khadaffy Janjalani was burned on October after succumbing to battle wounds.

Authorities are awaiting the results of DNA tests to confirm if the body is that of Janjalani.

The Philippines has been on alert against possible militant attacks ahead of a gathering of 16 leaders from Asia due next week in Cebu, a month after the meetings were postponed, ostensibly due to typhoons.

The British and American governments had warned militants were planning to attack the summit in December but the Philippine government has denied the meeting was cancelled because of security concerns.

The British, Australian and Canadian embassies in Manila still advise their citizens against travelling to Cebu but Manila has insisted there is no security threat. With reports from AP/Reuters

FLOATING BOOKSHOP
MV Dusita, the world's largest floating bookshop, docks at the South Harbor in Manila. Dusita, built in 1974, is the world's oldest ocean-going passenger ship. It was bought by the German-registered charitable trust Gute Buecher für Alle e.V. (Good Books for All) in 1977. It has welcomed 18 million visitors who have been on board for tours, programs and visits to the floating book fair. Family volunteers from over 40 countries, it is in the Philippines from Jan. 4 to Jan. 11, 2007. EDI ALCAZ

Good news, bad news from Meralco

By Abigail L. Ho

CONSUMERS OF THE MANILA ELECTRIC Co. may have to suffer a one-time additional charge of 26.14 centavos per kilowatt-hour (kWh) on their January bills, but at the same time see the generation charge component of the same month's bills go down by 1.95 centavos per kWh.

The ERC, in its order dated Dec. 29, approved "a temporary adjustment to cover the generation costs and system losses, including the value-added tax, incurred in October last year," Energy Regulatory Commission chair Rodolfo Albano Jr. explained.

"The adjustment only enables Meralco to recover the amount it paid in advance to the generation companies to have a continuous supply of electricity in every household. Such adjustment does not result in any additional revenue for Meralco," Albano said.

The adjustment of 26.14 centavos per kWh in the January 2007 billing should no longer be reflected in the consumers' bill for the following month—unless adjustments in the generation rate are subsequently ordered by the commission.

Mr Rodolfo explained that the ERC's Dec. 15 order was not an approved's rate hike petition by Meralco, but was merely an order allowing the company to recover costs related to power purchases from the wholesale electricity spot market, National Power Corp. and its independent power producers in September 2006.

According to the ERC, it also allowed Meralco to adjust its generation charge for January to P4.9904 per kWh, 1.95 centavos lower than the December generation charge of P6.7099 per kWh.

Meralco had actually sought a generation charge of P6.7334 per kWh, from the August rate of P4.4299 per kWh. The ERC, however, approved a generation charge of P4.9904 per kWh, to be charged this month.

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TIGHT SECURITY
Members of the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA) and Bureau of Immigration and Deportation (BID) closely monitor the arrival of passengers at the Mactan-Cebu International Airport in Mactan to carry out intensive measures against the entry of foreign activists planning to join protests during the Asean Summit in Cebu next week. JOY CANTO

Army chief rejects 'mental torture' charges

By Dona Pazzibugan

PHILIPPINE ARMY CHIEF LT. GEN. ROMEO TOLENTINO yesterday rejected accusations that Army junior officers undergoing court-martial for the 2003 mutinous mutiny were subjected to "mental torture" during military confinement.

"We're not holding anyone in military confinement," said Tolentino, as he turned down the request of the wives of Lts. Sonny Sandoven and Jil Adrin Rabinada that the two officers be taken out of the Intelligence Security Group (ISG) compound in Fort Bonifacio.

Tolentino added that the officers' wives should see complaints about their husbands' detention.

"The committee determines the conditions of detention. We are not honor's children when they were," the army chief said.

He said the Army was being "extra careful" about securing Sandoven and Rabinada since they were regarded as "high risk" prisoners.

On Jan. 17, 2006, Sandoven escaped from some detention with Lts. Lawrence San Juan, Nathanel Sabanta and Patricio Sinsuing Jr., all accused of participating in the Oakwood mutiny.

Rabinada along with Army 2Lt. Angelbert Gay and Navy Lt. (j.g.) Alvin Sudaria did not report for work or even dual (absent without official leave) shortly after.

Gay, Dada were captured in February but year while the six officers were arrested at a safehouse in Quezon City on July 27, 2006.

Since their capture, the officers had been kept at the maximum-security ISG compound, which is reserved for high-risk prisoners like Abu Sayyaf members.

Some of the rebel officers served "time within" one after the other. Only Rabinada and Sandoven remain confined at the compound.

The wives of Sandoven and Rabinada asked for "humane" treatment for their husbands while under detention. They said they were afraid that their husbands would go insane from prolonged confinement following their capture last July.

Tolentino denied that Sandoven and Rabinada were being forced to sign affidavits that tag some opposition figures as their coaches while they were on the run.

"No, you cannot force anyone to sign an affidavit. It has to be voluntary," Tolentino said.

PNP seeks travel ban on Abra gov, 3 others; House to probe slay

By Alcuin Papa

POLICE HAS FORMALLY ASKED THE Department of Justice (DOJ) to issue a hold departure order against Abra Gov. Vicente Valera.

In a letter to the DOJ, Task Force Lightning urgently requested Valera last Dec. 29 in Quezon City, said they received "intelligence reports" that the governor and three of his bodyguards were planning to leave the country or elude charges filed against them.

In Tagaytay City, meanwhile, the House committee on public order and safety will hold a public hearing on Jan. 23 to look into the political killings in Abra.

Pangasinan Rep. Amado Espino Jr., committee chairman, said the hearing was a response to resolutions filed and privilege speeches delivered in the House urging Congress to look into the killings.

Valera is under suspicion as the mastermind of the Dec. 16 murder of Mrs. Rep. Luis Bersamin Jr.

In 2004, Bersamin sponsored Senate Resolution 583-46 calling for an investigation of the proliferation of private armed groups maintained by politicians in Abra.

The resolution, among other things, had asked Espino's committee to "unearth several killings perpetrated by the same groups."

Valera has denied any involvement in the Bersamin murder.

However, former soldier Rufino Sandan and (the) Freddie Dupa, a suspect in the Bersamin murder, told Sun.Star Baguio that he (Sandan) denied the murder of Bersamin in exchange for P5 million.

Charges of illegal possession of firearms have been filed against Valera and his three bodyguards, Pedro Castillo, Oscar Abella, Leo Bello after traffic policemen found seven guns inside the governor's Chevrolet Suburban.

Valera's rebuttal was flagged down in the early hours of Dec. 29 for revealing unknown license plates.

On Jan. 3, Valera posted a P250,000 bond for his temporary liberty. He also posted a bail of P20,000 for all three of his bodyguards.

Police also said yesterday they would be conducting a blanket check on the governor.

Aside from the Chevrolet Suburban worth P1.49 million, Valera is said to be the owner of a Ford Lynx, a Ford Everest and a Toyota Revo.

Police are also verifying information that Valera recently withdrew about P4 million from a bank in Abra.

In Baguio City, Senior Supt. Edwardo Bayangat, Cordillera director of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, said they were scheduled to file motion for a separate ill-legal possession of firearms case against Valera in Bangued, Abra.

Bayangat said the case stemmed from the seizure of an unlicensed rifle from Valera's house in Bangued last month. He said the rifle was part of the evidence they recovered when they raided the governor's house on the strength of a search warrant issued by Executive Judge Romeo Antonio of the Quezon City regional trial court. With reports from Edwin de Senio-Fuertes and Maurice Galvez, Inquirer Northern Luzon

VALERA

4 men charged with murder of Laoag reporter

A GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE AND three other men have been charged with murder in the killing of a radio reporter in Ilocos Norte, a town police chief said yesterday.

Melito "Ando" Acosta, who worked for radio station DZJC in Laoag City, died hours stabbed seconds minutes after arriving at a hospital where he died. Acosta died on a motorcycle in nearby Bacas town in Ilocos Norte last month.

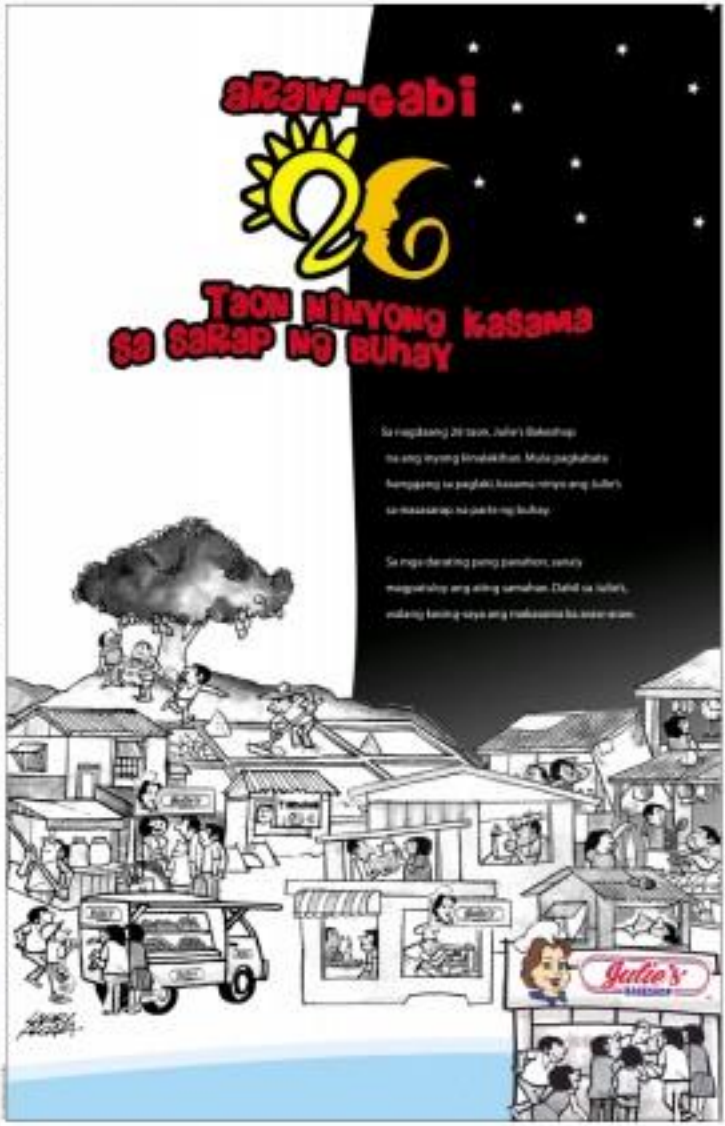
Solon police chief Supt. Bienvenido Bayon said the murder charge was filed last week against Joseph Calimbo, of the provincial agriculture department, and three friends in the stabbing death.

A government prosecutor will determine whether there is enough evidence to bring the case to court.

Acosta, 46, apparently confronted the four men because they had allegedly stolen radio and other debris on a highway near Calimbo's residence, Bayon said. Acosta, who worked for radio station DZJC, had earlier reported unidentified people throwing radio at motorists passing by the area.

Based on a list prepared by the National Union of Journalists in the Philippines, Acosta was the 30th journalist killed in the country last year and the 82nd since democracy was restored in 1986.

Provincial Police Chief Romeo Ritz said the police do not consider Acosta's killing as work-related or politically motivated, describing it as "an ordinary street crime." AP



Weak GMA population policy blamed for heavy toll in calamities

By Norman Bordadora

A UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES-based organization yesterday blamed the Arroyo administration's weak population policy for the steady destruction of the country's watersheds and forests, among other areas of biodiversity, that led to heavy casualties during the heavy flash floods and massive landslides of 2006.

The damaging effects of "human population pressures" were one, listed for two papers entitled "Critical Connections in Population and Biodiversity" and "Mined Connections: Population and Environment," presented by the Forum on Family Planning and Development (FFPD).

The country's yearly population growth rate of 2.36 percent adds 1.38 million "new Filipinos" annually and is a critical factor that puts pressure on the environment, said Juan Antonio Flores Bautista, president of the FFPD and a former presidential population and social development adviser to then President Fidel Ramos.

The Philippine population, he said, was estimated at 86 million in 2006.

"Population growth and poverty compel people to live in ecologically dangerous zones such as forests, geological fault lines, slopes of active volcanoes, river banks prone to unpredictable rises in water levels, and places along regular typhoon corridors," Dr Cruz said.

Various parts of the archipelago have suffered from flash floods and landslides that claimed thousands of lives, the most recent being the flash floods that caused landslides along the slopes of Mt. Pinatubo in Aliaga and Mexico, and the more destructive being the landslide that hit Barangay Guinsaugon in Southern Leyte.

The FFPD also said the population boom is forcing people to move into places that should be reserved for biodiversity and the country's biodiversity. This movement into ecologically dangerous zone also increases people's vulnerabilities to natural hazards," the FFPD said.

Areas that should be reserved as biodiversity reserves are forced to become agricultural areas and fishing grounds to produce enough food for the growing population.

Evidence shows the high proportion of the population engaged in agriculture, hunting and forestry harvest the ban to forest cover or biodiversity of an area," the FFPD said.

FFPD deal a study conducted by the environment think-tank Conservation International that showed a 28 percent increase in population density will result in a five percent decrease in forest cover.

"A high rate of poverty and job-lessness drive this lowland upland migration with the expectation of higher income from logging, and land ownership for subsistence agriculture," it added.

The Conservation International study shows that there are 23 provinces experiencing very high "socio-demographic pressures" on their forests.

These include the conservation priority areas in Palawan, Mindoro, Samar, the provinces of Cagayan Valley and those of the Cordillera Administrative Region.

The FFPD said the Philippine Progress Report on its Millennium Development Goals in 2003 showed that the country has lost one million hectares of forests from 1988 to 1997.

Mangroves have decreased to 120,000 hectares from 300,000 hectares over the last 75 years," the FFPD said in its report.

The group, quoting a study by Biofo Laboratory for the proposed forest and Wildlife Bureau and the National Economic Development Authority in 2006, also said that only five percent of the remaining coral reefs remain excellent condition.

"Seagrass beds declined by 38 to 50 percent during the last 30 years," the FFPD said.

The FFPD has called for another national census to determine where the country stands with regard to its population. The last national census was done in 2000.

Morales seeks review of 2007 Customs target

By Leila B. Salaverria

CUSTOMS COMMISSIONER Napoleon Morales is seeking a review of the revenue target of the Bureau of Customs for 2007 in view of the stronger peso and the absence of new tax measures.

Morales appealed to Finance Secretary Margarito Teves to take another look at the bureau's P223 billion collection target for 2007, which is nearly 20 percent higher than its 2006 goal of P186 billion, saying that nothing had changed since he set the 2007 target could have changed.

"We are appealing to Secretary Teves to review our collection target," Morales told reporters.

He said that the BOC's P223 billion collection target for this year was premised on an exchange rate of P52 to $1, but most of that the peso has since strengthened and has gone down to a little over P48 to a dollar.

The exchange rate is significant because in collecting taxes and duties, the BOC bases its assessments on the dollar-denominated acquisition value of the imported goods.

Morales also said the absence of new tax measures this year could make it more difficult for the bureau to meet its target collection.

He said that in 2006, the value added tax was increased from 10 to 12 percent, thus boosting the bureau's collection.

The customs commissioner said he wanted a review of the target to determine whether the 20 percent increase was justified.

He said the revenue forecasting managers might have other assumptions that led them to increase the bureau's target.

"We want to know why they imposed the 20 percent increase. Maybe they have assumptions. The increase if they expect the importation to rise, then no problem. We just want to talk about whether 20 percent is reasonable or not," he said.

Morales also said he would continue to work to increase the bureau's collections by trying to eliminate smuggling activities at the country's ports.

He signed the office day a memorandum of agreement with international shipping line under which the latter's vessels would be allowed to return to the BOC the copy of their cargo manifest before they reach the port of entry.

He said this would help the bureau prevent the misdeclaration, misdescription or misvaluation of imported goods, which lead to widespread smuggling and deprive the government of revenues.

Defensor defers Cabinet exit to fight Cha-cha bid

By Christine O. Avendaño

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO'S CHIEF of staff Michael Defensor will stay on the Cabinet for the moment to fight the flash push to amend the Charter on a people's initiative.

Defensor, who was slated to resign this week to prepare for the senatorial race, said he was concerned about what he had been hearing the past weeks of the new push for Cha-cha being initiated by political allies of the President.

"This might only result into destabilization which we do not want in the face of the good economic conditions," he warned.

Hours before his press conference, Defensor was unaware that the people's group "Sigaw ng Bayan" had announced its bid to revive the people's initiative.

"I think there is a need to stop this... I think more than ever this revived IR may really pose a danger not only to the President, to the administration but to the country in general," he said.

"Imagine a situation where a 2nd IR is being pushed again and then you will have a divided Cabinet ... some of them pushing, some supporting it—and you have different sectors of society battlefighting it out."

Defensor said that as a loyal member of the President's Cabinet, "I believed it necessary that I will be part and to openly speak against the second IR, and to stop any effort coming from Malacañang or any other part of the Cabinet to pushing for the 2nd initiative."

Asked whether the effort is being pushed within Malacañang, he said there was "no such effort coming from us and I have been a witness to one of the discussions and my colleagues in the Cabinet have in Malacañang were preventing it."

Defensor said he had been talking lately to a lot of people, including Cabinet members, and that he expected some would come out to attack this new initiative.

"We as members of the Cabinet and the administration, we can quickly do this and influence our allies," Defensor said.

LITTLE GIRL'S TREASURE

Barangay is one strategic area of the City of Manila under the Magsaysay bridge, this little girl scavenging paper seems a bag of goods to be distributed by President Macapagal-Arroyo to residents of Barangay 659 Zone 98 in South Magsaysay Thursday. JOY BONG

BIR readies aggressive tax campaigns for 2007

By Cynthia D. Balana

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL Revenue is readying aggressive tax collection programs this year to meet its BIR's collection target of P729 billion.

BIR Commissioner Jose Mario Buhay has instructed all BIR regional offices, district offices and national offices to come out with their own plans for an effective and successful tax collection of for this year.

Buhay said offices would focus on improving the voluntary compliance of taxpayers, noting that collections from audit and investigation generally comprised just about two percent of total internal revenue collections. About 98 percent of BIR collections come from voluntary compliance.

At the same time, Buhay insisted that their collection target for 2006 was not 667.9 billion but only 560.4 billion which was to be derived solely from its operations.

He explained that of the 667.9 billion total collection target set by the national government for last year, 108 billion were revenues and 19.5 billion were customs.

"How could the BIR collect the P19 billion from documentary stamp taxes when the Bureau of Treasury did not sell such documents?" he asked.

He pointed out that the BIR "had" P25 billion from the expanded value-added tax collected because the amount was credited to the Bureau of Customs.

He said that total BIR collections FY 2006 **P560.4 billion**, or P20 billion less than the actual target.

On the tax collection programs, Buhay earlier extended the Improved Voluntary Assessment Program until Jan. 27 to enable taxpayers to avail of the last priority to make by voluntary compliance with tax obligations.

He said that the Run After Tax Evaders (RATE) Program would be further tightened and fully enforced, adding that the BIR would not tolerate any evasion of the tax laws and regulations.

The BIR commissioner also directed the further widening of the tax base by expanding the list of actual and potential taxpayers through the computer system. This would make it easier to monitor payments of their tax obligations, including deadlines for payment of taxes, and possible delinquencies.

Buhay said that to encourage taxpayers to voluntarily file their tax returns and pay their taxes, the BIR regional, regional and district offices should strengthen their information and other services to taxpayers.

PCGG claim on PLDT dividends sparks talk

By Dustin L. Luna

THE GOVERNMENT'S MOVE TO collect up to P5 billion in unpaid cash dividends from the telecommunications giant—which could top 19 billion, including compounded interest—is not related to efforts to compromise stalled privatization efforts.

By making its claim before the courts, PCGG ensures that these dividends will not accrue to the new owners once the privatization of the PTE shares are completed, but to the government which has been holding on to them sequestered as assets for the last 20 years.

After two decades of legal battles, the Supreme Court ruled last year against the heirs of Harriet Cojuangco and Ferdinand Marcos, declaring 111,615 shares of stock in Prime Holdings Inc. (PHI), which serve as 48 percent stake in PLDT, as "ill-gotten in nature."

The aggressive move to collect accumulated earnings is "unrelated to efforts to sell the shares [of the Philippine Telecommunications Investment Corp.]," Monde cautioned.

"What we're trying to do is just make sure that we get the dividends that should accrue to us."

Monde expressed confidence that PLDT will report an accurate figure of how much it owes the government, adding "we have ways of verifying this figure."

According to Monde, the PCGG had set its sights on PLDT earlier and met with its senior officials, all of whom assured him that the cash and stock dividends are being held in escrow, ready to be turned over once the government asks for it.

"The dividends have been just in escrow in a bank by PLDT itself, earning interest, for the benefit of the owner of the shares...in this case the government," he added.

Miaa revenues rise by 15% in 10 months

By Nikko Dizon

THE MANILA INTERNATIONAL Airport Authority (Miaa) generated gross revenues of P3.6 billion from January to October last year, up by 15 percent or P476 million compared to the same period last year.

Airport authorities said Miaa's **failure to impose the proposed P200 airport tax** last year, as well as its **inability to provide alternative** ground source to the airport terminals **dampened its revenues for 2006.**

"The revenues could have been bigger had the Miaa been able to implement the collection of terminal fees planned or executed last year, like the security fee," Miaa spokesperson Jim Sibayan said.

The Miaa's collection came from aeronautical fees, rental fees, concessionaires but not terminal fees, among others.

Miaa had expected to collect P7.03 million annually from the imposition of the security fee, which the agency intends to use for the upgrading and modernization of its security equipment at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport terminals.

Cruz earlier said the income that the agency intended to impose the security fee not more than Jan. 15.

Miaa's net income increased to P7.23 million, a 17 percent increase from the same period last year, and exceeded the agency's P6.06 million income target for January to October 2006.

The Miaa said international airport operations at the Nido terminal by two percent to twice of flight and passenger movement and one percent in terms of cargo movement.

Domestic operations saw a 15 percent increase in passenger movement and a one percent increase in flight movements.

Domestic cargo movement, however, decreased by seven percent.

The Miaa said that figures from November to December were not included in the announced data.

However, the money to be used for the "legal costs, technical repairs and the required improvements" for the Nido would also set into the Miaa's total revenues for 2006, the agency said.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Saturday, January 6, 2007
Before Epiphany
St. Andre Bessette

Liturgy of the Word: 1 Jn 5:5-13
Gospel: Mark 1:7-11 (or Luke 3:23-38 or 3:23, 31-34, 36, 38)

John the Baptist preached to the people saying, "After me comes one who is more powerful than I am, I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you in the Holy Spirit. As for me, I am not worthy to bend down and untie his sandals."

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth, a town of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And the moment he came up out of the water, heaven opened before him and he saw the Spirit coming down on him like a dove. And there came a voice from heaven, "You are my Son, the beloved, with you I have chosen."

Commentary:

Jesus has overcome the world, in water, blood, and the Spirit. And all these witness that life is in the Son. Jesus—life that is eternal. Andy, crude fat. To be in the Son is God's eternal life. Believe the Word—and in believe, is to have the Word.

AB This is Baptism. Jesus is baptized, and proclaimed by the Father to be his own beloved child, son, the chosen of God, as the Spirit descends upon him. This is our baptism, drawn into the presence of the Father, with Jesus, sharing Jesus' relationship to the Father to the power of the Spirit. We are his own beloved sons and daughters, children and chosen of God.

Ab For Western, Jesus lives unknown, as the son of Joseph. And never shows his ministry, his long line in the history of believers, is found, the chosen people of Israel.

Jesus is the fulfillment of numbers, but he appears as the fulfillment of the law, of prophets' warnings and promises, of hope and the faithfulness of God. He makes his appearance, begins to make himself known. His baptism sends him to reveal himself to the world.

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DON'T COUNT OUT CHA-CHA

Plebiscite still possible in time for May 14 polls, says Abalos

By Jerome Aning

A PLEBISCITE TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION may still be held simultaneous with the May 14 midterm election, depending on how fast the proponents can muster another "people's initiative" or signature campaign to, first, with recently issued implementing guidelines.

"It depends on how fast they can do it. If signatures can be gathered and verified quickly then, yes, a plebiscite may be held on May 14," Commission on Elections chairlady Jenny Abalos Sa said yesterday.

In a media briefing, he noted that last year's unconstitutional initiative which was injected by the Supreme Court, took seven months to gather 4.9 million signatures. It was spearheaded by proponents Digno ng Bayan and Sulyap ng Kinabukasan of the Philippines.

3 months to do it

Under the law, they would have just a little over three months to regather about 10 percent of their original petitioners or 4.8 million signatures, which is the minimum number of signatures needed for a "people's initiative." This is equivalent to about percent of voters in each province or 12 percent of the voter electorate. The Comelec will have to verify each and every signature.

The Comelec then has 30 days to decide on the sufficiency of a petition for Charter change. The plebiscite may be set not earlier than 45 days or not later than 90 days after petitions approved by Comelec.

There remains about 140 days before the May 14 congressional and local elections.

Critics criticized

Abalos lashed at Comelec's critics who accused the agency of complying with the arroyo administration to facilitate Cha-cha by first tracking the issuance of supplemental guidelines for a new people's initiative.

Abalos cited Comelec Resolution No. 7796, which the Commission approved on Sunday last Jan. 2, was in compliance with the Supreme Court ruling that affirmed the constitutionality of RA 6735 and left to Comelec the job of formulating and implementing rules and regulations (IRR) everywhere it.

Malicious interpretation

"Why do people from a malicious interpretation of this? If we don't act, we'd be criticized of being remiss in our duties," he said.

"The Supreme Court said the law on people's initiative is complete. If we don't issue the IRR, how can we implement the law? If someone files an initiative petition tomorrow, and we abdicate our IRR, what will happen?" he said.

Abalos said Resolution 7796 will prevent the use of questionable methods in the gathering of signatures.

"We want to avoid the way the signatures are gathered, will come be taken out of," Abalos stressed.

Avoiding another 'grand deception'

Resolution 7796 provides:

• That those pushing for the initiative must also ensure that before the registered voters sign the petition it correctly their support for it, they "must have read and understood the petition and the proposed amendments to the Constitution."

• That signature gathering shall be "the exclusive domain and private concern of the proponents," and that all expenses relative thereto shall be solely borne by the proponents.

• "Any specific form to be used for the initiative petition proper, the certification of the required number of signatories and the verification report for the signatures.

• That signature forms may be established by the proponents. The initiative leaflets will inform the election officers when the stations will be set up, the dates for the signature gathering and the dates when the signatures will be submitted for verification.

• That procedures for verification of signatures should be the majority that of voters, voter's affidavits and voter's identification card used in the immediately preceding election.

• Significantly, that the verification can be done "during or after" the signature-gathering process, with the election officer required to give the public two weeks advance notice of the verification schedule.

The election officer must also "ensure all efforts to verify the signatures submitted in the most expeditious and efficient manner and shall refrain from any unnecessary delay," the resolution stated.

Anti-Cha-cha moves

Meanwhile, militant protest, labor and urban poor groups yesterday vowed to block any attempt by Ulap, Bigno or any other administration allies to push for a second people's initiative for Cha-cha.

Bayanang Magkaisang ng Pilipinas secretary-general Danilo Ramos said campaign barrios would primarily be fought in the villages and communities where the agents of the administration would "again try to fool the people into signing another spurious initiative to gain millions of signatures."

'We will fight all the way'

"We will fight this all the way, from the barangays and villages up to the national level. At the top level, it involves and mission of a nationwide campaign against Cha-cha and the disastrous effects it would have on Philippine society, especially on farmers," he said.

Anakpawis Rep. Crispin Beltran said the new Comelec resolution was "another evolved government scheme to push Cha-cha and also is constitutional evidence that will force the proponents and their economic and political leaders.

The national congressman said with the May polls approaching, Comelec should just focus on its preparations for conducting orderly and fraud-free elections.

Bayan said that Comelec "should not also have hastily issued an IRR with Resolution 7796 because it has again opened an avenue for an exceptional group and individuals to push their self-serving agenda."

Very self-serving

"They should not have presented powerful officials to stand such initiatives, because it is very self-serving," the present leader said. "It also adds to the rising public perception that the Comelec is a willing subservient tool to change the Constitution and perpetuate itself in power."

Beltran said Cha-cha at this point would fail because the people are already against it.

"Any campaign to amend the constitution that is initiated by Malacañang and its allies can never be credible, and it can never bid any good for the Filipino people and the nation," he said. "The self-serving and power-hungry agenda of its main proponents are transparently clear and present."

ABALOS: It depends on how fast they can do it

SEE YOU IN COURT: Members of the militant Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) announce their plans to stage protest rallies during the Arroyo summit in Cebu next week. YOUNG PHOTO/ARCHIVES

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US balks at VFA review

From page A1

Santiago said Lacambra's statement that a review would be "premature" was his own opinion. "That's their point," she said.

Ripe for review

As a reaction to Arroyo's announcement of Malacañang's resolve to review the VFA, Santiago said she would call a hearing of the Senate when Congress resumes sessions on Jan. 22 for the purpose of crafting a resolution representing the sense of Congress that the agreement should be renegotiated.

After Congress passes the resolution, the DFA can attach non-binding to the US government requesting a review. But if the US government rejects this, the Philippine government has the option to give a one-year notice of termination, Santiago said.

The senator said that the VFA was "ripe for review," and that some of its terms had to be clearly defined.

Those terms include the "completion of judicial proceedings," of which the judiciary is on one hand and the executive branch on the other have conflicting interpretations.

"It should not be the judiciary, but the political branches—the executive and legislative branches—which should have a prerogative to define the terms of an international agreement," the senator said.

Santiago, a staunch administration ally, said President Macapagal-Arroyo took the right step in calling for a review of the agreement that, the senator noted, was "almost a decade old."

"The President has to respond to public opinion. She's responsible to the electorate," Santiago said.

Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, a (coa) member, agreed that there should be a review of the agreement that he, Santiago and 15 other senators ratified in 1999.

"Remember, the ball is on the court of the executive at this point, especially on the review. It is not the legislative that will negotiate with the US. It's going to be the executive," Biazon told reporters.

To the suggestion that the government delegation the troop manual at reviewing it, he said, "Macapagal is not yet on the table. The only thing that I think has secured a remarkable level for review."

'Why blame us?'

Michael Defensor, the President's chief of staff, wondered why the Arroyo administration seemed to be taking the brunt of criticism for locality issues in US custody even in the absence of an order from the Court of Appeals.

Defensor said the executive branch handled the custody case as provided for by the VFA, which, he pointed out, was another agreement (not signed) by the Arroyo administration.

"Who signed the VFA? It was then President Joseph Estrada. Who ratified the agreement? It was the Senate at that time, many members of whom are still in the Senate," Defensor told reporters.

Asked if he was then blaming the Estrada administration for the agreement, he (Estrada) said, "But why blame us?"

Call for cooperation

In a statement, Santiago did her bit. Presidents Pichay and Cebu City Rep. Antonio Cuenco called on US authorities to address public concerns over Smith's transfer to Subic's custody by "working diplomatically" to amend the VFA.

Pichay, vice chair of the Commission on Appointments, and Cuenco, chair of the House committee on foreign affairs, made the call in reaction to Lacambra's statement that a review of the VFA at this point would be premature.

"The VFA is a must because it is in line with the 1951 RP-US Mutual Defense Treaty. But its terms and conditions can be reviewed any time," Pichay said.

"The US should show sensitivity to the present situation by not shooting down immediately a review of the VFA," he said.

Cuenco, who also co-chairs the Lords, said Lacambra's statement was "counterproductive and insulting to the Philippine government, which is being hit by bullshitty shouting by the VFA while weathering the opinion over Daniel's transfer." With a report from Christine Q. Avendaño

Palace now dead set to kill VFA commission

From page A1

[illegible] Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago.

"I understand that Malacañang will now decide that either through executive order. They will [illegible] wait for the 2007 budget to be passed," Santiago, chair of the Legislative-Oversight Committee on the VFA, said in an interview.

Insubordination

Santiago said she agreed with the President's plan, noting that the statements aired by PHAGOS executive director Undersecretary Gaudencio Bacolor stunning the Malacañang's transfer order constituted "insubordination."

The hearing learned that Bacolor was summoned yesterday to the Palace by Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita. At press time, the hearing was unable to reach Bacolor.

As part of the executive branch, the VFA Com should conform to the policy set by the Foreign Secretary, Santiago said. "It's most of insubordination for a minor member of an executive agency to contradict the Secretary of Foreign Affairs. The government cannot afford to have a subordinate overtake a superior with respect to foreign policy. We can't be speaking in different voices."

The senator said she believed that there was no more need to maintain the VFA Com, whose function of monitoring the implementation of the VFA duplicated that of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Bacolor charged that the executive branch "took the law into its own hands" when it detained Smith out of the Makati City Jail to the US Embassy at dawn in midnight on Dec. 20 even before the Court of Appeals had yet to rule on a custody case.

Santiago, who also chairs the Senate committee on foreign relations and who had tangled with Bacolor in the past over differences of opinion on foreign affairs matters, said it would be prudent for Malacañang to let go of the VFA Com chief.

"He should be let go. There's no need to fire an administrative case. He's too minor a figure," she said.

The senator said as chief of the VFA Com, Bacolor was expected to bow to the administration line even if he had the tendency to "speak out of turn."

'Personality disorder'

"If he's speaking from his conscience and he can't openly contradict the administration, then he should resign," she said.

Santiago had sought the abolition of the VFA Com as early as two years ago because of the executive director's "personality disorder."

'DAVID VS GOLIATH'

Nicole's mother praying for miracle

By Tarra Quinsumbe

PRAYER IS THEIR SHIELD and truth is their shield, according to the mother of "Nicole," the Filipina woman now fighting to have her convicted rapist removed from US custody and returned to a Philippine jail.

In the family's fight against "Goliath," hopes for a miracle are high, the 48-year-old mother told the Inquirer yesterday on the phone.

"So I've said, this is a fight between David and Goliath. They (US officials) are powerful. Gloria (President Macapagal-Arroyo) is powerful. But we have to pray and we tell the truth. These are our only weapons," the mother said. "But miracles happen, right? David always wins."

Despite the family's claimed resources and weary spirits, the mother said, she and her other children would continue to support Nicole in fighting for justice and victory over Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith.

The US Marine was convicted of rape on Dec. 4 and slapped a judgment of up to 40 years.

Despite a pending petition at the Court of Appeals, he is now back in American custody after being removed from the Makati City Jail and transferred to the US Embassy in Manila on Dec. 29 through an executive agreement between Philippine officials and US diplomats.

Evelyn Uemura, Nicole's lawyer, called the transfer an "escape."

Not letting up

Nicole's legal team is preparing to ask the Supreme Court to declare the executive agreement "illegal and unconstitutional."

"Of course, we will continue assisting Nicole. We will finish what we started. We are not letting up and, besides, there are many people supporting us," said the mother.

The long-time civilian employee of the Philippine Navy admitted that she had spent millions of pesos from her savings and the family's earnings, sold property and taken out numerous loans just to get Nicole through the confusing legal proceedings.

And since the rape in November 2005, she has been at least without pay from the Navy, she said.

"My family keeps on praying. In all that we do, we put our full trust and confidence in God. We know that nothing is impossible with God," the mother said.

She said the win hearing is to hasten to get back to the woman she blamed for Smith's transfer "Kailan ba ito? Ito ba ito si President."

No legal basis

But Juan de Mesa, one of Smith's lawyers, defended the transfer and said there was "no legal basis" for the petition of Nicole's camp seeking the dismissal of an appeal of a convict who had escaped prison.

Speaking by phone from Smith's holding room at the Aguinaldo building in the US Embassy compound, De Mesa said the pleading had been superseded by the appellate court's Jan. 2 decision.

That decision said Smith's pending petition to be returned to US custody had been rendered "moot" by his Dec. 29 transfer, but it also upheld Makati Judge Benjamin Pozon's ruling on Dec. 13 that Smith must stay in Philippine custody because US jurisdiction over him was terminated upon his conviction.

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CHA-CHA AGENDA

Puno tells governors to focus on May elections

PUNO advises pro-administration governors to move on. Photo taken on Monday at the DILG office.

By Bill C. Cabacungan Jr.

A LITTLE OVER A WEEK BEFORE THE nation's governors convene to decide whether to continue to support Charter change, a Cabinet secretary has urged them to trade their resources on the May elections instead.

In an interview with the Inquirer on Thursday, Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno said: "My advice to the governors is to just focus on the elections. There comes a time you have to move on and start talking about the elections instead of going back again. Especially all of them [who] are running, they should prepare for the elections rather than talk of change."

Puno's statement was by far the clearest sign Malacañang was slackening off in its drive to push for constitutional reforms ahead of this year's May elections, as strongly urged by Speaker Jose de Venecia and the Lakas faction of President Macapagal-Arroyo's Cabinet. Puno is the Senior chair of Kampi, the President's party.

Even Sen. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, chair of the League of Governors of the Philippines, had called for a meeting of all the country's governors on Jan. 12 to decide whether they would continue to push for Charter change and bring after the President announced that she no longer saw no reforming the Constitution.

Eastern Samar Gov. Ben Evardone, a pro-Cha-cha proponent, said that a group of local government officials had been discussing over the Filipino of a second people's initiative petition.

Unlike the first petition, which was thrown out by the Supreme Court, Evardone said the second petition would call for the resignation of the President, a shift in constitutional congress and the holding of the Marcos elections.

The Lakas faction in the Cabinet had twice failed to get the Constitution amended—the first time via a people's initiative and the second through a constituent assembly—largely because both modes called for the postponement of the May elections and that would automatically extend the terms of the incumbent officials.

"If they (the governors) are hoping that there will be no elections, they will just be frustrated," Puno said.

Making sure the elections pushed through this year was "very important" to the country, according to Puno. "We should have elections because it is a way for [the] people to express themselves, negatively or positively, hopefully positively," he said.

Top Labor official doubts Filipino nurses will make beeline for Japan

By Jerome Aning

A SENIOR DEPARTMENT OF LABOR and Employment official yesterday doubted Filipino health workers would be making a beeline for Japan once the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA) was in force.

The pact was signed in Cebu in 2006 by President Macapagal-Arroyo and then Japanese Premier Junichiro Koizumi.

"Given what's there, many of our medical workers would want to go there. Japan is not that attractive [as a destination for health workers] compared to the United States, Canada or the United Kingdom, which are [overcrowded and] where our nurses can easily adapt to the working conditions," said the official, who asked not to be identified since the ministry is the office that led to the free trade agreement that is awaiting ratification in the Philippine Senate and the Japanese House of Councillors.

The JPEPA recently generated controversy when it was learned it might allow for the dumping by Japan of toxic waste in the country. This, however, was quickly denied by both the Philippine and Japanese governments.

"Even if the Japanese give our nurses and caregivers higher pay, I doubt if many would be willing to go through the difficulty of learning to learn the Japanese language and culture, when they could go to an English-speaking country," the official said.

Moreover, the source said, deployment to the US, the UK or Canada gives Filipino nurses a chance to become immigrants in those countries and to petition for their families later.

"Our Filipino medical workers are allowed to be choosy because there is a high global demand for them," he told reporters.

It will be needless that the pact to allow Filipino caregivers into Japan limited to 1,000 the number of Filipino nurses allowed to work in that north Asian country.

A wire agency report the other day said the deal on the nursing was done "more due to pressure from the Philippines than any desire by Japan."

The labor official, nonetheless, stated, however, saying that during negotiations for the "transfer of human resources" portion of the pact, Manila opted to drop its insistence on a demand-based deployment and bowed to Tokyo's "supply-based" stand.

"Even if we get the Japanese to agree to a demand-based deployment, we realized that Japan was determined to restrict the entry of Filipino nurses. [Even] anyway by demanding that they undergo two-year language and cultural skills training," he said.

But the official said the stringent skills training for foreign nurses was "underestimable" since most of them would be working with elderly Japanese.

Also, Japanese medical groups have been "very strong and influential" about lobbying the Japanese parliament, known as the Diet, against accepting foreign nurses, the Labor official said.

The trade pact, formally known as the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement, is awaiting ratification in the Philippine Senate and the Japanese House of Councillors.

₱10-B bonanza for AFP modernization

From page A1

over differences on the Charles Orange issue with other Cabinet members.

"We've shortened the process very much," said Esperon.

In her speech, the President told the military top brass that she wanted them "to initiate a strategic defeat of the communist new rebel movement by 2010, drive the NPA beyond and other terrorist groups and contain the secessionist groups in order to establish a center on national security directive to national development."

Improved fiscal position

The President said that with the government's early unprovided fiscal position, it would now allocate an initial P15-billion, with the promise of more same funds. So will extra funds be found the National Power Modernization Law which she helped write as a senator in 1995.

"That law called for a 15-year modernization program, which means that it should be completed by 2010. So will extra funds be found the implementation of the modernization program by 2010 or rescheduled," said the President who blamed the government's poor finances for the delay.

Mrs Arroyo said she has set aside the P18 billion or published the revitalization for the building, "we will release new funds for other purposes," she said.

"When we do all these, I do hope that the more than 100,000 enlisted men and women who will also benefit with a better way of living," Mrs Arroyo said.

Shopping list

Lt. Gen. Antonio Roberto, head of the military panel on upgrading equipment, said big-ticket items to be purchased include six strike helicopter (S-61 II) helicopters, 20 upgraded M113 armoured personnel carriers and several shallow water boats for soldiers to penetrate river areas and coastlines in the south.

Other items to be the dropping list included aircraft, tactical radios and bullet-proof vests.

He said all the equipment was to be delivered within the year except for the helicopters which usually take about a year from the time of the approval of the contract to actual delivery.

In the pipeline

Of the promised P10 billion, however, the military only has P5 billion on hand which was released in April 2005.

Romero said they are still waiting for the release of the other P5 billion, although P1.9 billion was already in the pipeline.

During the meeting, Mr Arroyo called up Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya to speed up the release of the remaining P5 billion.

Romero said the military was ready to hold a public bidding for the contracts, most of which will be approved by the bids and awards committee (BAC) of the department concerned headed by Assistant Secretary Rafael Nagac.

The DND-BAC approves contracts worth P50 million and above, while the AFP-BAC, chaired by Rear Admiral Alfredo Abang, approves contracts below P50 million.

DND chief approving power

Mikaelsing said it appears common sense at least P500 million, but he has power to the approving government.

Romero said the P5 billion they already have could pay for 18 of the 34 items in their procurement list.

He said there to contracts would be bid out "immediately" saying that they "will wait for additional funds."

Addition officials told Romero the government planned to spend P50 billion to the six years from 2006 to upgrade the military's international equipment capabilities.

Basic equipment needs to hold copters, trucks, rifles, radios and smaller boats were programmed for acquisition until 2012.

About P60 billion to buy equipment for the Air Force and Navy is slated for 2012 to 2016 and P120 billion to modernize equipment would be spent on the third and last six-year period until 2022.

With a report from Reuters

FLASHING THE NO. 1 sign, the members of the United Opposition hold a meeting at the Club Filipino, Greenhills, San Juan city, among other things, to hold Brian Jamison Aguinaldo Reform Secretary Rolando Morales, on Sen. Bibit Cayetano, Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay on Sen. E

May election Round 3 of Gloria v

From page A1

Defensor, who has made no secret of his plan to seek a Senate seat, also said the results of polls should not be seen in black versus white, as the opposition would want.

"They accuse this government of corruption and failure to uphold good governance. But the Estrada administration is still was not a model of honesty and good governance," he said.

He also said the public would "see through" the candidates queuing for Estrada's endorsement: "Some of them were actually those who bid in smoking Estrada, and now they are riding with him just to run as election."

Indeed, the United Opposition (UNO) — the party composed of Estrada's Partido ng Masang Pilipino and PMP-Lakas — is jockeying allegiance to a single platform of government.

"The candidates must conform with [our] anti-GMA platform," Makati Mayor and UNO chair Jejomar Binay said in a meeting of the coalition yesterday.

Binay declined to name some UNO senatorial candidates, saying that discussions were still ongoing and that the list would be finalized possibly next week.

He said the screening process was "very democratic" and involved several leaders of the group.

On own strengths

Defensor said what takes the battle lines had been clearly drawn, voters were likely to vote for candidates simply and not as a team.

"Administration candidates will win largely on their own strengths and not on team support," he said.

He cited Senator Mar Roxas and Fix Cayetano, who were among the top vote-getters in the 2004 polls—the results, he said, of their individual strengths and successful campaign strategy.

Apparently, not only Defensor but also other members of the Cabinet are planning to run.

Or at least this was what Defensor said separate, saying he had heard the names of Tourism Secretary Ace Barcelona, Health Secretary Francisco Duque and Trade chief Augusto Lopez "mentioned" for possible inclusion in the administration slate.

"Their names have been floated," he said at a press briefing.

And while he had not personally spoken with his former colleagues about their supposed candidacy, he said he had too heard from them or rather.

But Duque expressed surprise about the matter in a phone interview with the Inquirer in Dagupan City.

"I don't know. I will have to assess the situation first," he said. "Will I be able to help the President better by being a senator or a health secretary?"

Other possible bets

Defensor said that according to Gabriel Claudio, the President's political adviser, the administration had yet to complete the slate.

He said the administration's other possible senatorial candidates were Representatives Miguel Zubiri, Pompeyo Negrales, Prospero Pichay and Gilbert Teodoro.

Anyone from these lists? Defensor said

New York City hails 'Subway Superman'

From page A1

Bellporter controlling on the tracks. As he vomited, he thought: "I'm Bin-Oh-ma-to-Oh-ki."

He eyed the two people between the rails before jumping on top of the teenager, Autrey said, and relied on his experience as a construction worker used to "wire-bind spaces" to calculate—in split second—that "maybe we have enough room."

Before jumping, he had to made sure his daughters were OK and asked two women to hold their hands.

The southbound train passed the spot where Autrey had been and Bellporter remained there for 20 minutes while EMS workers shuttled off the third rail.

Doing the right thing

"What I did was something any and every New Yorker should do: If you see someone in distress do the right thing—help out."

In a statement on Thursday, the family of Bellporter, said Autrey "deserves all of the attention and the accolades that are now being bestowed upon him."

While Bloomberg called Autrey "the hero of Harlem" and the New York Post newspaper dubbed him the "subway superman," the presentation ceremony and the star hero were left to wonder.

Autrey returned medical attention—and then went to work at the incident. He been doubt believe his excuse for being late to work until he was on the Editor-Chief called Autrey had done. Autrey said he then bought him a "hero" sandwich.

Metropolitan Transportation Authority Executive Director Elliot Sander called Autrey's action "a death-defying act of bravery. We truly have not seen anything like this ... He was at the right place at the right time and did the right thing."

Free rides, cash award

Along with the rich award, Autrey was also given a year's worth of free rides on New York's subway and buses, then met with real estate mogul Donald Trump, who gave him a $10,000 check, along with two other checks from another benefactor.

The Walt Disney Co. gave Autrey and his family a one-week fully paid trip to the Disney World theme park in Orlando, Florida, and tickets to the Broadway musical hit musical "The Lion King."

The New York Film Academy, where Bellporter studies, said it had given Autrey $5,000 and offered scholarships to his daughters, while The New York Daily News reported Autrey had been offered a television show appearance.

Autrey is also scheduled to appear on both "The Late Show With David Letterman" and "The Ellen DeGeneres Show."

No better way to start '07

"Good things happen when you do good," Autrey said. "What better way to start a new year than saving a life?"

Autrey said he had visited Bellporter in hospital and met the young man's father.

Previous recipients of New York's Bravery Medallion include civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., Gen. Douglas MacArthur, Muhammad Ali and baseball legend Willie Mays. The last recipient was Manning Andrews, employee Felix Vasquez, who caught a baby thrown from a burning New York City building in 2005.

Reuters, AP

"HERO OF HARLEM," Wesley Autrey of New York's City Hall on Thursday receives the Bravery Medallion from Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Previous recipients of the award were Gen. Douglas MacArthur. (Mark Bellporter King Jr. and Muhammad Ali.

Terror alert,

From page A1

Cruz, however, brushed aside the warnings of some "Western countries," saying that "when it comes to issues of security we cannot compare the threshold of Filipinos with that of other countries."

"We view things differently," he said, saying that as such warnings came from the country's Asean partners.

President Macapagal-Arroyo said authorities were taking the warnings seriously but insisted that the summit would proceed.

"We have faced some challenges before in the hosting of international conferences but this particular summit we believe that we could hold it at the proposed site in Cebu," said Foreign Secretary Ignacio Bunye, the President's spokesperson.

After being heavily criticized for last month's cancellation, the President hopes to endear the country's people, urging all Filipinos to join their "best foot forward" during the week of the summit in Cebu.

"It is a moment of pride for all Filipinos who have chosen our much-loved worldwide and accolled once more to put the best foot forward of this island's treasures," the President said in a speech during her annual New Year's visit with military leaders at Camp Aguinaldo headquarters yesterday.

Philippine showcase

The President told the summit is showcase a "new Philippines" where it plays host to Asean and East Asian countries.

"We should mark this as our coming-out party, our debut into prosperous world," she said.

"The agreements that I expect to be signed will be a collective harbinger of greater stability, cooperation and people-to-people effects emanating out to achieve greater prosperity from our Asean freedom from want in the fastest growing regions of the world," Mrs Arroyo said.

Matthew Lussenhop, first secretary and spokesperson for the US embassy in Manila, said the US has developed its travel advisory on Cebu although it maintains a "general travel warning" for the Philippines.

He would give no further details.

Bishops give scathing review to best picture

From page A1

issue in the recent Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF).

The author of the scathing review is the Catholic Initiative for Enlightened Movie Appreciation (Cinema), the film body of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP).

"Tuong Kalesode 3," a fantasy movie and the latest installment of a yearly MMFF blockbuster, got two-thumbs down in many international and the Cinema review board no. 4.

The five-star rating means "disturbing," which is a notch higher than "offensive."

Neither did the movie fare well in the technical aspect, with the CBCP film body giving it a three-star rating in the equivalent of "average."

'Extended fist Bulaga'

And when it come to the principles, Cinema board of film reviewers under the CBCP's Oh Hee on Wooma, said: "It was not based on logic, so don't be surprised if it lack aesthetics..."

"And don't go looking for good acting or an intelligent script because neither can be found in the film," the film body added in Filipino.

The Catholic critics described the movie as an "extended" version of "Kat Bulaga," the noontime show, TV variety show featuring the same group of celebrities, including the home video plays this Christmas Day.

Cinema said the movie teamed with complete gaggle of actors, but was somewhere near "Harry Potter" or "Lord of the Rings" in terms of quality.

"Kind if they say the movie was based on a fantasy, the story the battle between good and evil... its message was blurred by a concoction of slapstick humor, poor musical, and, and in related comedy," the film body said.

One roast chicken

How did such a bad film get top honors in the MMFF? the critics wondered.

Cinema said viewers need not look far. Due criticism, a whopping 40 percent—for best picture was "commercial viability."

"You now understand why the movie went to the movie," the CBCP film body said. "How can the film industry use when a movie's excellence is based on how much it can attract money?"

The Catholic critics lamented that a mix of comedy and battle to win the "formula that appeals to the Filipino taste."

"Are you willing to spend hard-earned money just to get treated to the cinema?" the group asked the public and listed the better ways to spend P140, which is the usual price of a movie ticket.

"You can buy so many things with your P140—six kilos of rice, one roast chicken, 14 sticks of Marlboro, or a kilo of grapes," the CBCP film body said.

The Cinema rated Dekada, lead star and producer of "Tuong," for a condition on the CBCP review, but all he said the best movie was "No comment."

Deby Dayrit, executive producer of "Tuong," told the Inquirer in a phone interview: "The best-office count speaks for itself. The people decide where they want to watch and the more bad that it's still the 1 at the box office means that what we're offering them is worth their time."

Dayrit stressed that the CBCP should have taken note of the underlying message of the movie: "That good always triumphs over evil."

He said the film's only goal "is to entertain, ... and we believe we passed the jurors' criteria. We were not the ones who voted, we are only recipients of the award."

Mahen Chua-Pagsa, executive vice-in-charge of production for "Kat Bulaga," said the author viewed the CBCP review, "but this movie's 'kat' 'Bulaga' first name is doesn't ask for the award. They should complain to the MMFF."

She added: "Maybe the review the CBCP said 'Tuong' is an expanded version of Kat Bulaga' is because our stars gathered in the movie. Anyway that's the CBCP's opinion."

Everything in order

Rayzel Fernando, chair of the Metro Manila Development Authority (which spearheads the MMFF), said he had not read the CBCP's review and declined to comment.

As for the negative comments against "Tuong," as lone pinoy winner, Fernando said in telephone interview: "Everyone has his or her own opinion ... I stand by the decision of the board of jurors. It's composed of 11 people, including two National Artists."

He added that he had endorsed "the evaluation reports of the jurors, and the failure to exhibit by the Lucenzaing from 1 HUD (BuCup Sonny Salapa & Co.), and found that everything was in order. I am ready to settle. I am ready for the results."

...ner drawing up its senatorial slate and its campaign platform, which seems to be for "toppling anti-GMA," from ...ermo Maceda and Rep. Benito Zamora. ...

...s Erap fight

...ner, chair of the Optical ...y probability.

...ational senators seeking ...more surprised that ...were being considered ...ident Manuel Villar and ...ayo, Ralph Recto and ...

...ates the administration

...ates

...ate to UNO's ongoing meet- ...ent eight opposition lead- ...ovie" candidates.

...others were still being ...the following were re- ...former Senator Loren ...Sotto II, Teofisto Guingo- ...Vice President, and even ...". Dimaporo, Jun Aras ...ne, one of Estrada's man- ...Senator Pete Cayetano and ...and Bongay Aquilino Pi- ...the senatorial seasons ...ally still being considered ...ating slate are Senators

Villar Pangilinan, Recto and Pimentel Lacson, former Senators Sonia Osmeña and John Osmeña, actor Richard Gomez, Step Brothers "Bentot" Aquino III, and even Antonio Trillanes, a leader of the Magdalo group that mounted the failed coup of 2003.

But Binay neither confirmed nor denied the list. He said with a smile that nothing was final.

Senator Juan Ponce Enrile said only he was no longer in the running and wished previously to others.

He said more than 20 personalities had approached UNO asking that they be included in the slate.

Talks are also supposedly ongoing with leaders of the Nacionalista Party and the Liberal Party for a possible coalition.

Binay and UNO would apply for accreditation at the Commission on Elections as the dominant opposition party.

House bets to ensure GMA impeach

As such, it will be entitled to a voice of the election czars in doing canvassing.

Binay also said UNO had started talks with prospective candidates for seats in the House of Representatives.

According to former Rep. Ni Emilia of the Nacionalista party, the groups winning at least a third of the total congressional slots would enable the political opposition to ensure the impeachment of Mr. Arroyo.

"The elections this year are really about whether to allow Mr. Arroyo to rule to the next three years or beyond, or to oust her this year," Bondoc said.

Binay said the focus was on fielding strong candidates for the House.

"We are also considering asking our congressional candidates to sign a covenant saying they would sign an impeachment complaint against Gloria Macapagal Arroyo," he said, adding:

"This would not completely guarantee their loyalty but at least something will bother their conscience."

Lacking the numbers, opposition lawmakers had twice since last failed to impeach Mr. Arroyo. **With reports from Christine Q. Avendaño in Manila, and Gabriel Gershenson, Reporter Northern Luzon**

RP geologists rock, mines study shows

Point page A1

...ton (pegged at slightly lower than current metal prices)," it continued.

That, "indeed, is a very significant contribution from such a small force," said one of the authors, Gerardo Angeles Jr., who presented the study yesterday in a forum at the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City.

By "small force," Angeles, a mine exploration manager connected with Central Client Goldfields Plc, was referring to roughly 1,000 active Filipino geologists worldwide.

The small number of Filipino geologists, he said, was disproportionate to their large contribution to "world-class economic class 1996."

Across 3 continents

The study reported that the mineral discoveries were spread across three continents: 12 made in the Philippines and Indonesia, five in Saudi Arabia, and two each in South Korea and Mongolia.

One discovery made was also made in mostly Chile, China, Guyana, Laos, Malaysia and Russia (Myanmar).

A recent overseas discovery was in Laos in 1996, yielding 121 tons of gold and 1.9 million tons of copper, amounting to $13.33 billion (P661 billion), the study said.

The Filipinos who contributed to the exploration in existing mines were José Aquino, William Brockman and Benedito Rasela.

Filipino edge

Between 2002 and 2003, a Filipino-named Augusto Theoro was one of the discoverers of a goldmine in Guyana. The find produced some 62 tons of gold worth $1 billion (P49.8 billion).

Angeles said he himself had led one such exploration for a previous employer in Indonesia in the late 1990s, which yielded 27 tons of gold worth more than $279 million (P13.6 billion).

In that exploration, he team included an American, two Britons and an Indonesian, said Angeles, president of Indonesia Orbit Inc., the forum organizer.

Since then, he has led other mine explorations in which he has had to decide between hiring Filipinos and other nationals.

"Filipinos have an edge, not only because technically they're very good, they're also culturally sensitive. And they speak good English," Angeles said.

"In contrast, it takes a lot of adjusting for Europeans used to working in London to work in 'Third World conditions,'" he added.

J. Paul McKibben, an Australian trainer of the Philippine Mineral Exploration Association, vouched for the Filipinos' skills in the geological sciences.

World-class

"You have world-class geologists. You can compete anywhere," he said in the same forum.

The study noted that a fourth of Filipino geoscientists here and abroad were employed in mining-related positions, either as project or country-level managers or chief geologists.

The study was the result of an informal survey of Filipino geoscientists mostly through e-mail correspondence, cross-referenced with public data on mineral deposits, as well as reports on the mineral deposits who were present during the discoveries.

Despite the accomplishments of Filipino geologists in the global mineral industry there is much to be done to revitalize the profession in the country, Angeles said.

Scholarships, jobs

McKibben said there should be closer coordination between academe and industry.

"Since employers need grads one, we should help colleges produce them," he said.

Such a collaboration could take the form of scholarships for students and job opportunities for graduates, he said.

Ms. Ian Bernice Rodriguez-Tolentino of the UP National Institute of Geological Sciences pointed out that since 2000, the number of geology graduates ranged from 15 to 25.

"It's the number, very low actually, global geology is back-lined (?)," she said.

She suggested ways to encourage students to take up geology, by offering more scholarships and educating some of the academic requirements.

Promote awareness

"A more permanent solution is to promote geoscience awareness to the general public and to encourage other universities to offer geology as a course," she said.

Benjamin Philip Fernandez, president of the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines and Benguet Corp., said a fresh geology graduate from Australia with a license could earn up to Australian $80,000 (P3 million) a year.

"There's a demand for these are not enough geologists ... so companies are always pursuing people," Fernandez observed.

"That's why whenever one of my people gets invited to Toronto (Eddie Ong), I get nervous. I call the next it he'll come back," he said, referring laughter from the audience.

...yes but no rain on Asean parade

...Monsoon, the Canadian government issued travel advisories issued in the ...and stages of planning arrivals.

...anada's warning

"Following the announcement ...and the previously postponed Asean meeting) will now be held in Cebu ...a January, there is a renewed threat ...terrorism," the Canadian government said on its website.

"Credible information suggests ...terrorists are in the final stages of ...among attacks," it said. Its embassy ...affirmed the warning to figures ...ment Peter yesterday.

"If this been postponed or cancelled ...or several weeks now. The only ...December was made when the ...Asean. Now the summit's moved ...and in the Philippine government ...Hector Hussell Hilario, political and economic counselor with ...the embassy, said AFP without elaborating.

One diplomatic source, who did ...want to be identified, said: "It ...of the to set on the side of caution ...the summit itself is not to say that ...but there are groups out there ...who may want to make their presence felt, and unfortunately the presence at the summit was."

The Australian embassy said yesterday it was monitoring its warning that Islamists suggested terrorists were in the final stages of ...planning an attack, but declined to ...comment further.

In Sydney, a spokesperson for ...Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Foreign Minister Stephen Smith would be attending the summit, in lieu of Foreign Minister Alexander Downer. The spokesperson did not say why ...Downer, who had been slated to attend the canceled summit in Cebu ...last month, would not attend.

The British embassy is also keeping its advisory but cautioned its consular ...activities remain.

...o direct threat

"There is no direct threat. Based ...on intelligence information, there is ...no established threat from terrorist," said the Armed Forces public information chief Lt. Col. Bartolome ...Bacarro said.

He said that if there was a threat, ...would be from lone lobbyists ...

Viet terrorist hunted

AUTHORITIES THEREHAS launched a nationwide manhunt for an alleged Vietnamese deserted terrorist who could pose a threat to leaders of the protocolos of food from Asia, Pakistan and their East Asian dialogue partners during their summit in Cebu City next week.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said police were attempting to find Sophie Vilin Nguyen Tan before the 12th Summit of Leaders of Asean, scheduled for Jan. 14 to Jan. 15, amid a warning from Canada of a possible terror attack.

The summit was to have been held in Cebu in December but was postponed after Canada as well as Britain, Australia and the United States warned of terror threats. The official reason cited for the postponement was an incoming typhoon that eventually spared Cebu.

"In view of the uncertainty as to the whereabouts, it may be assumed that he has not left the Philippines and therefore poses a threat to the forthcoming Asean summit," Gonzalez said.

Tan, 33, who is also known as Vi Van Dan, is the alleged leader of the Free Vietnam Revolutionary Group.

Corrupt Bi officials

He was arrested in Manila in 2003 while allegedly assembling a bomb for use in attacking the Vietnamese Embassy here.

He was convicted on charges of illegal possession of explosives and was serving a four-year sentence when in 2005 he was illegally freed by corrupt immigration officials who gave him a Filipino passport.

Efforts to locate his sister have been futile and their immigration officials are now being investigated for the fiasco.

Immigration officials "cannot state with certainty if Vi Van Dan is still in the country," Gonzalez said.

Also wanted in Thailand

Gonzalez said Tan was also wanted in Thailand for a failed bombing of the Vietnamese Embassy there in 2006, as well as for an arson attack on Hanoi's consulate in London in 2006.

Tan was born in South Vietnam, but records show he declared permanent address is in San Jose, California, Gonzalez said.

Since before the cancelled summit, the justice department started moving against suspected high-profile terrorists, Tan being one of them.

Gonzalez, who has declared he would not allow militant groups to disturb the holding of the summit and threatened to hunt down the chiefs, ordered National Bureau of Investigation Director Nestor El. Mantalong to hunt down Tan.

"So Vi Van Dan is a fugitive from justice, having evaded surveillance of his service, an warrant of arrest is needed for his arrest," Gonzalez said in a memorandum. **AFP with Armand Nocum**

The idea beyond killing terror gang which has emerged as the worst terror attacks in the Philippines repeatedly has ties with the al-Qaida terror network of Osama bin Laden.

Trapped in Sulu

Hundreds of Filipino troops, with assistance from the United States, have also been searching for two members of the Jemaah Islamiyah group, key suspects in the 2002 Bali bombings that killed about 200 people.

A senior military commander said the idea beyond and Jemaah Islamiyah groups did not pose a threat to the Asean summit.

Lt. Gen. Eugenio Cedo, chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines Western Mindanao Command, said the two groups which have ranged from Muslim here and to Indonesia were trapped in Sulu province where the military has been pursuing them extensively for the past five months.

"They like terrorist groups ... can slip out [of Sulu] because there are not equipped to infiltrate ...," Cedo said separate interview.

"The threat remains to remain," he said.

Asean groups Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Burma, the Philippines, Singapore, Siamese and Thailand, South Korea, Japan, China, India, and Australia and New Zealand are in dialogue partners. **With reports from Dona Pazzibugan, AP/Pearl AP**

IT'S A GO: The flags of Asean member countries are up in Cebu City as President Arroyo vows to prove the country's best foot forward in month after postponing the meeting of 10 leaders and their dialogue partners allegedly due to a typhoon which, however spared the country's venue. ...

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

Failure of nerve

EDITORIAL

EVEN THOUGH THERE IS MUCH TO PRAISE IN the reasoning behind the Court of Appeals decision on the Smith custody issue, the ruling itself was abrupt and flawed. Writers with great confidence, the vigorously written decision sputtered at the end, well evidently having lost its nerve.

The result is a new ghost on a famous saying: victory has a thousand fathers, yes, but ambiguous legal victory sires a million children. That is why everyone interested in the issue, including the government officials whose contradictory behavior puzzled the justices in the appellate court's special 16th division, now claims to have found vindication in the court's decision.

Did the court in fact upholds the controversial—and in our view, patently illegal—transfer of custody of Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith, the convicted rapist in the Subic case? No. It only took judicial cognizance of the transfer. Because Smith had in fact already been transferred, from the Makati City Jail to the US Embassy, the court ruled that Smith's custody petition was moot.

The appellate court used a rather fine distinction made by the great US Supreme Court justice, Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., to justify its decision "to consider the matter treated in the petition moot." Holmes, a famous advocate of judicial self-restraint, had once written: "The other branches of the Government are ultimate guardians of the liberties and welfare of the people in quite as great a degree as the courts." Yes, quite. But what happens when the other branches—or in this case the executive alone—fail their responsibility as ultimate guardians? The underlying issue in the Smith custody case, it seems to us, is the unconscionable decision of the executive to effect a transfer of custody without waiting for a court order.

As Undersecretary Zenaida Ramos, the often criticized official responsible for overseeing the Visiting Forces Agreement, correctly and yesterday: The Palace took the law into its own hands. It had previously recognized that the custody issue was within the jurisdiction of the courts by filing the necessary pleadings. By effecting the transfer, stealthily and without a court order, the executive violated the law it was sworn to serve.

In other words, the age-old question was raised in the custody issue: Who will guard the guardians? We are sorry to see that the Court of Appeals failed to give the right republican answer: The other guardians.

We have reason to believe, however, that the court did in fact have the question. Consider the following highlights of the decision:

The court could have simply junked Smith's motion for certiorari, but it did not. "Petitioner's motion to certiorari may be simply denied for non-compliance with the requirements of the rules. But, we go further in view of the far-reaching consequences of the core issue vis-à-vis the VFA that has been brought to the fore." In other words, it thought the case was important enough to make an exception.

The court saw—or rather, saw through—the essential character of the VFA. "The VFA is not about preventing soldiers from any harm. It is all about containing and restraining visiting soldiers from causing damage and injury to the host country." In other words, the VFA was not "a legal shield."

The court noted the irony of the administration's shifting position on custody: the government "did not share the views of the GS lawyers as well as the petitioner regarding custody, except only until lately; that is, after the respondent judge affirmed the petitioner guilty of committing rape beyond reasonable doubt." In other words, we fought for custody of the accused but not of the convicted.

The court also scored to on Smith's self-serving argument about the meaning of "all judicial proceedings." that: "We have been a petitioner who says judicial proceedings ensues from trial all the way to completion of appeal when arguing for custody by US authorities and says another, that judicial proceedings ensues trial court proceedings only when arguing the meaning of the case-year time line." In other words, Smith and his lawyer are playing on for a fool.

All these and more—and there a bizarre twist at the end, a failure of nerve disguised as a grandiose curtsey to diplomacy. We are sorry to see the Court of Appeals go so far, only to come up short.

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A not impossible dream

SEPARATE OPINION

Isagani A. Cruz

THIS NEW YEAR IS LIKELY TO SEE A renewed of the efforts to amend, or better still, revise the present Constitution. It is hoped that they will succeed this time. After all, the charter will be 20 years in February and its operation during all that time has revealed many imperfections that need to be corrected.

The common impression is that the Constitution is not a mere statute that may be changed by another statute in the discretion or even the caprice of the legislature. It is supposed to be a permanent document to be preserved and protected "against the strife of storms."

But the virtue of permanence may at the same time be a disadvantage when the Constitution is unable to adjust to the "storm" for change justified by new conditions and circumstances or as indicated by statistics experience.

In the case of the Constitution of 1987, we have discovered many of its shortcomings that need to be rectified. There is, moreover, an intense demand to change it based not only upon any such need but to suit the personal ambitions of selfish leaders seeking to retain their powers and prerogatives under a new charter.

Two of the prescribed methods to revise the Constitution have already been tried and failed. In 1997 and later last year, the initiative was outlawed by the Supreme Court. The separate cases of Santiago, Perez and Lambino, all against the Commission on Elections, proved its undoing. Its proponents are reportedly going to remove, but we do not see any reason.

The second method, Resolution 1 called the Con-ass, also failed disgracefully last month. The House of Representatives, through the illegal amendment of its own rules, tried to convene Congress into a constituent assembly but without the Senate. The scheme was foiled one, not by the high court but by the scandal-tired people.

The third and only remaining method is the calling of a constitutional convention by a majority vote of all the members of Congress. This time it will probably be agreed that the majority vote shall be taken separately by the two chambers instead of being based on the combined of all the members of Congress voting jointly.

If this call materializes, I hope the implementing statutes will ensure or at least attempt to limit a component body composed of intelligent delegates moved by unpolitical or non-partisan desire to frame a new Constitution more adapted to the present times and responsive to our current problems in this computer age.

The envisioned constitutional convention shall be elective and not appointive like the Constitutional Convention of 1986. That body was composed of delegates chosen carefully by President Corazon Aquino on the strength of their acknowledged virtues of integrity and intelligence, best personified by its president, former Justice Cecilia Muñoz Palma.

In contrast, the Constitutional Convention of 1935 and 1971 consisted of elected members, some of them, especially those in the first body, were established political leaders like Claro M. Recto, Jose P. Laurel and Manuel A. Roxas. The second body was presided over first by Carlos P. Garcia and then by Diosdado Macapagal, both former presidents of the Philippines.

The Constitutions drafted by all three bodies, while generally creditable, had their separate defects, being human handiworks and therefore far from perfect. The Constitution of 1935 was drafted while we were still a colony of the United States and therefore subject to its control. The original 1972 Constitution was mangled by Marcos during his dictatorship. And the major objection to the present 1987 Constitution is that it was framed by delegates who were not chosen directly by the people.

If the plan to call a constitutional convention polls through, I hope Congress will take special particular care in requiring appropriate qualifications for its elective delegates. In my humble view, they should indispensably be possessed of academic or educational qualifications like appointive officials and even civil service employees under the present and previous charters.

This should prevent the intrusion into the future constitutional convention of incompetents from ignorant political dynasties, entertainers popular either whose only credentials are their popularity in the box office, and nuisance elected through guns and gold whose only function in the government is to misappropriate the pork barrel.

I know I may be pining for modes in the air, but it is not an impossible dream. It was point-ten decades before the present government which is a modernism of corruption, mayhem and plain stupidity. It is so different from the more serene years when the people could rely on the public officials as their protectors in the common effort to promote the welfare and fortune of the nation.

I hope the leaders of this apparently hopeless regime will down themselves of all the worries that has imprisoned my suffering country in their tenacious death-for power and plunder. It is we, the people, who can release themselves from their tyranny and confidently approach a better future in this new year of 2007.

The worst of all possible worlds

GET REAL

Solita Collas-Monsod

I UNDERSTAND FROM MY UP COLLEAGUE Rene Aram that another instance of political legerdemain occurred in Congress a couple of weeks ago, when the House of Representatives repeatedly voted, 201-0, to pass a bill mandating a national P125 increase in the minimum daily wage. Aram says that only 20 of our congressmen were present that afternoon, when the bill was repeatedly voted on. Yeah, huh? 20 honorable 155.

Those numbers notwithstanding, one can safely assume that our congressmen "voted" that way to increase their chances for reelection. To anybody who thinks that it was done to improve workers' welfare, banish the drought, decrease squeeling a minimum wage, or its increase, with improving the welfare of workers is like saying that 155 equals 155.

Here's how it works. A legislated minimum wage is a "floor" price is by definition higher than the market-clearing or equilibrium wage. It is some equal to or lower than the equilibrium price, it would be superfluous.

Will there be those who will benefit from the higher minimum wage rate? Yes. The workers who can retain their jobs at the higher wage rates will obviously benefit.

But that doesn't mean that all workers will benefit. It must be remembered that wage and salary workers comprise only half of the employed labor force. The other half are (a) self-employed (own-account) and (b)ers who are unpaid family workers. An increase in the minimum wage is not going to increase the income of self-employed farmers, fishermen, vendors, etc.

And there will be direct losses from the higher minimum wage. For starters, the workers who were working at the previous wage rate, but who will lose their jobs because their employers can no longer afford the higher wages. Add to that number those who were previously not looking for work (because they consider the wages too low), but are now actively looking for jobs that are unfortunately unavailable at the higher wage. How beneficial is a higher minimum wage if they cannot find work?

Can it be argued that the prospects of the wage gains will compensate the losers? Unlikely. Even if that were possible, it is still not sure that waged labor as a whole will benefit, in the sense of a larger wage bill, or the share of wages in national income. Because if the demand for unskilled labor at that price range is elastic, the effect of a higher wage rate will be overwhelmed by the effect of the decrease in number of employed.

That is still not the complete picture. The 58 percent of the employed labor force who are not wage earners, as pointed out above, will not only not benefit from the increase in the minimum wage, they might even lose. Why? Because a wage increase will surely put upward pressure on the prices of goods—which means that the real income of the self-employed and the unpaid family workers will go down—they will be able to buy less goods, with their unchanged income, than before.

The same negative effect will be felt by fixed income earners—the retirees with fixed pensions or families who depend on an overseas worker's fixed income, were government employees, who are not covered by the minimum wage law.

And finally, one has to take account of the effect of the minimum wage increase on the unemployed. Are distinguished from those who might lose their jobs, or those who were not looking for work before, but will now enter the labor market, numbering from 2.6 million to 3.7 million people, depending on whether we are using the new or old define.

Are they here to income at all, and will be faced with rising prices and poorer prospects of employment.

Not a pretty picture. And definitely not one that can be described as beneficial to Philippine labor.

So, this is being pushed by those who claim to have the interest of the laborers in their wrote hearts. If that is the case, then they are fortunately also have worse heads because they cannot see that their so-called solution was given rise to problems that will hurt laborers most.

And please, spare us the argument that this increase is needed so the minimum wage is not enough for a worker to support a family of six, or words to that effect. In the interests of accuracy, there are, on the average, two workers per family (37 million workers, roughly 16.5 million families)—one just one, as is assumed. This argument also erroneously assumes that all workers are wage-workers, and worse, that all will be able to keep their jobs even if the wage rate is increased.

If we want workers' incomes to increase—and who doesn't?—the ultimate solution is by increasing the demand for labor, or decreasing the supply of labor, or some combination of both. In turn, that means increasing skills, education, training (on the demand side), and family planning (on the supply side).

For the short and medium term, if wages are to be set, collective bargaining between labor and management at the firm level would be the preferred option, with government coming in if there is asymmetry in information or other market failures. Failing that, industry-level wage setting, and even regional-level wage setting, would be the next best.

The worst of all possible worlds, given the huge socio-economic disparities in the Philippines, is wage setting at the national level. And that's what the House of Representatives wants.

One can only hope that the sensible heads in the Senate will prevail.

Defective VFA should be honored

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cassandra

SEN ANTONIO ESTRADA, chair of the senate committee on foreign relations, and co-chair of the Legislative Oversight Committee on the VFA, said the Senate would review some of the ambiguous provisions in the VFA. This is in order, if we are to avoid the terrible dilemma these provisions have created. Actually it would be more suitable for the Senate to review them, as it's the document crafted by the Committee with heavy ratifying powers. It ratified the VFA that was signed by the executive branch under Joseph Estrada in 1999; ambiguities and all. The Senate has largely been quiet about the South Commission's recommendations, though it isn't the main culprit.

* * *

Rolex Sen. Hadie Zaki, chair of the House committee on government enterprises, who's supporting the Cayetano proposal, was quite in supplying the senators who argue for a return of Rolex to government-owned and controlled status among them in line. Rodolfo Biazon, who, as Senate defense committee chair, was co-sponsor of the GFI at the time. Considering all the legal hassles in the Senate at that time, it's quite ironic that he and some other wide cards also broke away. In this Cayetano change advocate, the chubby mark of the Senate media luminary, as well as Congress' failure to pass the 2006 budget, are also mentioned. Rolex is the most served a Honorable legislator. Its defender or not, as long as the VFA is in force, the Philippines has to honor its commitments under the treaty. This is the inevitable disagreeable.

* * *

In the old year ended, the Supreme Court issued a landmark decision that condemned, in the strongest terms possible, the bombing of the executive. It also drew home the urgent message that all of its Filipino users are important when play in connecting our forces and thereby preserving the nation. In a 68-page ruling written by Justice Alicia Chico-Santiago, the Court threw out the petition filed by the Paper Industries Corporation of the Philippines (Pricop), the country's biggest logging corporation, to automatically convert its Timber License Agreement (TLA) into a 25-year "Forest Management Agreement" (Fma). The Court then reversed the Court of Appeals and the Quezon City Regional Trial Court, both of which had favored automatic conversion.

* * *

The high court's decision reinforces former Environment Secretary Heherson Alvarez, who was sacked for opposing the Pricop application. His statement contained in the Pricop, which was backed by some very powerful politicians, revolved on how sending a series of court decisions against the big companies would upset powerful vested interests during his tenure in the DENR. These include his decision to revoke not a non-renewal for small miners in 96. Brought to order to protect their rights against the big miners and to preserve the economic lands of the Bicols of Mindanao from encroachment by big business.

To appreciate the significance of the recent high court decision, it should be noted that the 1987 Constitution banned the issuance of these timber licenses. This is in place the DENR came up with the idea, in its wisdom, that these timber licenses, logging operations, such as tree planting and the use of sustainable forest management practices. In 1991 Fpa no. 43, which covers 75,000 hectares of forests in four provinces of Eastern Mindanao, is given in April 2006 and instead of seeking renewal, the firm sought to convert it into an Fma. Alvarez, however, refused to act on it until Pricop. The year the government (PDI) initiated a separate forest designation in August 2006 and completed with other requirements of law. In that time, the TLA was also holding overlap or unconstitutional of the Bicolano, and the Mindanao Commission on Indigenous Peoples (MCIP) also refused to grant Pricop the necessary documents. It was also found to encroach on an 8,000-ha. mineral reservation on land by Dinagat Mineral Corp. in 2003.

* * *

The Supreme Court upheld the trial court and the Court of Appeals and upheld Alvarez by compelling Pricop to pay its unpaid forest charges of P167.3 million to the government. It was also ordered to conduct and carry out silviculture forest protection and a reforestation program in the Bicolano, and to seek documents from the DENR and LGUs concerned. The Court also ordered the IRC order that Alvarez pay Pricop the P398 million it claimed it lost because of its inactive operations. The Court's ruling comes at a time after a lot of environmental losses was caused by these superplantations as well as massive flooding and mudslides in Southern Leyte, Surigao and Bicol. Said the high court: "The courts should not weaken such blatant disregard by those who believe they are above the law and have caused irreparable damage and significant number of workers employed." Alvarez says that Pricop has only itself to blame for the withdrawing of the conversion of its TLA. It said that "the political policy of increasing prosperity would be better served by granting such conversion to someone who will abide by the law."

* * *

My friend Julius Cagbay, who runs "Journeys of Faith," is leaving for a month's retreat in a cottage at pilgrimage in the "Land of the Bible." Inda Pri-7 to 14, which covers Egypt, Israel and Jordan. It strongly endorse this pilgrimage which my family did during their 2000 year-end trip to the places where Christ had lived, worked and died in less one in one's lifetime. This can work pilgrimage will be led by renowned Bible scholar and church minister Jaime Cardinal Sin, who was also our leader. Sin, who was also our chaplain then, for will combine prayers and reflection in each blessed site, in addition to saying daily masses. What better way to spend the post-Christmas get-out than to be in the actual place where Christ was born and raised?" says Julius, guarantee "a time for introspection and reflection, away from the maddening crowd and just being with God who loves us. Its a time of peace and rest outside..." Call Joe at 892-8.8.237 or 0916-8.8.8.8 or 0.8.8.8.8, or email julius.cagbay@gmail.com

Stage moms

YOU THINK YOU HAVE A PROBLEM HAVING A HOME mom? How about me? I have one mother, four aunts and more than a dozen family friends who are all convinced that I'll be their ticket into showbiz.

All of my life, I've been surrounded by doting females, who send me clothes with rules attached ("Wear this white skirt with those pumps, this blouse with that pair of pants..."), sit's dark

moms up in my face and say, "Sweetie, you can be anything you want to be, but I'm interested from my father, the big opinion, much me with their sons, daughters and dads. Only mom wanted Michael Bublé as a son-in-law, oooh, and generally dreamt how I should live my life to become a Mormon-approved

Young Blood

Maryann Fulmer
B. Chaudhary

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the youngsters writing online... Ed.

temporary. Another mom took me to the mall with her. We walked around, and my poor fashion sense popped. Unfortunately for her, she wasn't ready to accept a non-model. But for me, they might as well have been in Phase, for all I cared.

One mom arranged for a demo merge, from her fabulous obsession to cute me into a long Barbie doll. Whenever I went to her place, I'd make sure her entourage wouldn't be able to accommodate any fancy pink robe tops that usually formed a bikini single per mom's eyes wouldn't look big. But the moment the world spun my head, I knew by Barbie and Ken in new history. She'd pull me to her bedroom and pull down a whole mall of clothes and demand that I try everything. I would be stuck in a pile of tulle tops and miniskirts, wondering how my "Mona Lisa" quiz was faring without a player in the Playstation 2 still running in the living room.

The same mom would take me along whenever she had a party to attend, and I'd be stuck in the middle of hemorrhoids talking about modern and models and living-room furniture like she'd in a global mage. Or better still, a mood in a mall.

Since Vogue declared "Gods" fashionable, the regular shipment of clothes from my family aunts has included a poor excuse for a mom once or twice. On proof of the fact that clothes just when I pass because people are afraid I might get a handful of their hair and manufacture little voodoo dolls.

I stopped wearing my usual simple of mauve, neither by moment. Many I still started popularizing the stinky-eye of live. People used to frown. I didn't have to explain myself to them. Mom was just like every shop you may see the street.

There were time when my hair "was in the air." This was when I attending "because the "in" thing. My sister started coming over our, gives, for the natural coating of my nose. so straight and shiny look. Mother's care. I was happy with locks. At time it's gets hot the closed, I'd be stuck in gym. I'd be for her hair in black until the area of straight, shiny leaving hair.

As was offered to pay for the pocket lost, I refused. I said I'd only be her cut my hair and be disdain for the pimpled hair overhead.

The pitch-black somehow got wind of what my sister wanted. Hey, by hairstyle, she feared my hair straight to give the sense of things to come. I have to admit it looked good. My sister looked at me as if saying, "This could be permanent, you know..." after a day, I got bored and wanted the curly back.

Whenever I have because usually, she stopped pestering me about my hair. Mom's pestering, however, continued.

One of my moms gave friends tape binding of the "pocket-size" if she would be the undergo training under bali. When Dean 13 or 14, he would come every day to work with me to "the mall." I was supposed to glide through the room. I felt ridiculous in the "Lady Gaga" tape. I couldn't fathom why I would be just like the dancers, and I began to stage upset.

I was starting to turn from family teenagers to delicate twin when I realized what perfecting the catwalk would mean for me. There would be lights everywhere, along ceiling the floor of me, making and sense on my poor sandy naked body, and at the end of the stage, my cousins would be of people who barely even know the fact whose judgments of the personality I "made" strange would be sitting for life. I realized that this sort of thing was different than theater in the area you take off the mask when you go offstage. In beauty contests, you wear the skin on the stage.

That's when I decided into home contests. My mom's friend gave up. "Maybe when she's older..." he said hopefully.

I may not be an adult yet, but at the age things are going, the chances of my turning into an adult young woman seem bleak. My mom is hoping for my mom, though, which is growing stained and sunny every with, and I don't even care about my gender. I spend way too much time in front of a computer or travel in a book or sleepyhead to even join personality development classes or go to a shrink. I mention people who don't

Heroes should inspire, not put others to shame

LETTERS

THERE THE THE FILIPINO PEOPLE celebrate Rizal Day (Dec. 30) we always hear that Rizal was the first Indian Filipino prince. Rizal was a Renaissance man. Rizal mastered 22 languages. Rizal was nationalistic. Rizal was profess.

Since childhood, the image heard of in force of Rizal is that of noble and of a Filipino Christ, someone he mentioned from the age of harmony, someone who would put us all to shame. "You can never be a hero. Focus on your

Lawmaker explains Cha-cha advocacy and relief efforts in Albay

MAY ONE SAW IT ALL WRITING when he submitted his stance against me in his column in the Nov. 27, 2006 issue of the Inquirer. The business, history and politics which affine his statements border on revisionism. The following are the facts:

1. My position is no secret. I effect "Revising" which to help my constituents in Albay. It is not an "affit" for my Charter change advocacy. My record in the House speaks for my consistent independence issues. I do not have "ends and masses in the House and Malacañang." I follow my conscience. I do not have "ends and masses" in the House and Malacañang." I follow my conscience. I do not have "ends and masses" in the House and Malacañang." I follow my conscience. I do not have "ends and masses"

Across the NATION

Text or post-broadcasts inquirer.net or call/text 2-3-3 (Globe) or 183 (Smart). Assistant Editor Tony Bangoria

Hopes for Negros peace talks high

By Carla P. Gomez
Inquirer Visayas

BACOLOD CITY—CHURCH, MILITARY AND POLICE officials yesterday welcomed moves by Negros Occidental Gov. Joseph Marañon and prisoner-turned rebel Frank Fernandez to hold talks aimed at bringing development to the province.

Msgr. Victorino Rivas, vicar general of the Diocese of Bacolod, said "this is a welcome event for Negros Occidental because the armed conflict between the rebel and government forces has caused massive destabilization of the livelihood of the people."

"The suffering of the people has been aggravated by the armed conflict, that is why we welcome this turn of events. We appreciate the initiative of Governor Marañon, because as we know him, he wants peace in the province so services can be delivered to poor in the countryside," Rivas said.

He expressed hope that the talks would lead to lasting peace.

Top military and police officials of Negros Occidental also expressed their all-out support to the proposed peace talks.

Col. Gregorio Pastor, 303rd Infantry Brigade commander, described the exploratory talks between Marañon and Fernandez as a "welcome development" to the pursuit of peace in Negros.

"If the problem of insurgency can be addressed by local government units in their areas, as much the better for us," Pastor said.

Senior Insp. Rolando Franco, provincial police director, said he has been encouraging LGUs to initiate dialogs with communist rebels, since he assumed the Negros Occidental police command last year.

Franco said he hoped that Fernandez is sincere in searching for a solution to nearly 40 years of insurgency in Negros.

Rivas also lauded Fernandez, head of the NDF-Communist Party of the Philippines-Negros, for his willingness to dialog with Marañon to explore avenues of "cooperation for peace talks nationwide."

"It's a welcome event for the Church, it requires goodwill on the part of the government and also the rebel groups," he said.

According to Rivas, this initiative could become a "stepping stone for larger peace talks nationwide."

Asked if the Church would be willing to have a panelist in the talks, Rivas said that Bishop Vicente Navarro would be amenable to participate in this dialog.

"The peace talks would give the Church an opportunity to participate in attaining peace for the people, especially the poor, to attend."

Marañon yesterday said he was open to the idea of having a representative of the Church in a panel he is creating for exploratory talks with the rebels.

The governor had announced that he is creating a five-member panel to represent the province of Negros Occidental in conducting exploratory talks with local NDF leaders.

He also said he expects Fernandez to convene his own panel to intellectually start local peace talks, discuss specific topics and set ground rules, as a first step.

The governor said he would announce the members of the provincial government's panel simultaneously with Fernandez's announcement of his once-both sides reach an agreement.

Ben Bolhayat, of Bale Kalipunan, said his group supports the efforts of the government to hold exploratory talks with the local CPP-NPA, but they believe that it will never prosper.

"The CPP-NPA will never survive, it," he said, claiming that the proposal of Fernandez is pure propaganda.

Marañon said that he would like to know how does his proposal for peace talks evolve; it would not be construed as a publicity stunt.

"I want to see developments in the countryside. If peace talks are a way of achieving that we will explore the idea," he said.

Work gives hope to villagers displaced by calamities

A GIRL is driven to begging for alms from passengers of passing buses in Barangay Pudong in Legaspi City, one of the areas hardest hit by mudflows and floods whipped by Super typhoon "Reming."

LEGAZPI CITY—SOME VILLAGERS displaced by Supertyphoon "Reming" in Albay found temporary work building kitchens in 79 evacuation shelters in Albay.

At least 84 men and women were able to build 124 basic washing facilities, 248 toilets, and 49 single-unit bathing units in a "cash-for-work" program implemented by Oxfam, an international humanitarian organization, during the building operation.

The workers were selected from among the evacuees in the shelters, where the sanitary toilets were built, and were paid P150 to P300 each everyday the building on their skills and kind of work, said Mel Capistrano, program manager of Oxfam's Emergency Response in Bicol.

Joebito Millan, 33, father of two and whose family was temporarily housed at the upper Mabolang evacuation center in Tabaco, Albay was one of those hired by Oxfam for the construction of double-pit latrines in the evacuation site.

"We were given employment and we somehow more able to benefit from the work we did," said Millan.

He added he was able to buy medicine and a half-kilogram of meat last Christmas while earning P300 for his family's house repairs.

Oxfam earlier distributed P1,000-each grants and non-food items to Barangay Bangalon in Tabaco town and Barangay Sogod, Bigaho, Bobiong, Cabiangan, and Balogan in Camalig—all in Albay—covering 2,100 families.

In Malilipot, Sto. Domingo, and Bacacay—all in Albay—more than 3,000 families benefited from the cash-for-work program of World Vision, an international Christian relief organization, which was assisted by a $200,000 funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The hired workers, who rebuilt destroyed houses and cleared clogged roads, each received P150 and 5 kg of rice everyday.

Evacuees staying in public schools would have to clean up on Sunday so classes were to resume on Jan. 8 as ordered by the Department of Education here. Text-titles would be built in relocation areas in Albay to temporarily provide shelter for the displaced villagers, said Evelyn Jerusalem, public information officer of the Department of Social Welfare and Development in Bicol.

Nongovernment organizations and local government agencies are now involved in the construction of houses for the displaced villagers and providing alternative livelihood for those who have lost their homes to the mudflow, Jerusalem said.

She said the local government units are now submitting their rehabilitation plans, which would be consolidated and submitted to the DSWD central office next week.

A total of 6,500 families, or 33,789 persons, from 128 villages housed in 126 shelters in Albay still rely on government and nongovernment relief assistance for more than a month now after Reming ravaged Bicol, said the provincial disaster coordinating council, Ephraim Aguilar. Inquirer Southern Luzon

Farmers turn to fishing in wake of farms' destruction

LUCENA CITY—WITH THEIR farms decimated by excessive rainfall, displaced farmers are now turning to the sea for livelihood.

Glenn Torbio, central and eastern program officer of environmental group Tanggol Kalikasan, said the trend among farmers in the coastal towns of Quezon and Marinduque provinces to in some areas paddle their way back to Tayabas Bay.

"Most of the farmers in the coastal towns of Bondoc Peninsula in Quezon province and Marinduque are also fishermen. Temporarily shifting back to full-time fishing to survive living would not be difficult for them. They still remember the basics of fishing," Torbio said the seasons.

He urged the government to extend support to the displaced farmers-turned-fishermen by providing them with basic fishing equipment.

"We expected government agencies are force to cooperative and provide it with fishing boats and fishing paraphernalia for the use of the typhoon victims," Torbio said.

Typhoon "Reming" has betrayed the island provinces of Marinduque with more than 40,000 families displaced while widespread crop destruction and damage to fishing boats has disrupted the livelihood of most islanders.

Dependence

The coastal towns of Mulanay, San Narciso, San Andres and San Francisco took the brunt of these successive typhoons that devastated most farmers in the area.

But with the help of concerned government agencies and private sector, the typhoon victims are now slowly recovering from the tragedy. Most of them only need basic fishing equipment to survive. They can't forever depend on others," Torbio said.

The environmentalist group asked government authorities to conduct sustained anti-illegal fishing operations in Tayabas Bay particularly against big-time commercial fishing vessels.

He said the group, the Bicol coastal source fish wardens, environmental group, policemen and local government officials to stop illegal commercial fishing in Tayabas Bay the multi-armed groups could not catch up with the fast and modern big-time fishing vessels.

Ignored law

"Our monitored manager boat is no match to the speed of commercial fishing vessels," Torbio said.

Republic Act No. 8550, or the Fisheries Code of 1998, prohibits commercial fishing vessels from operating within 15 kilometers of municipal waters.

But this has been allegedly ignored by commercial fishers who continue to operate with impunity in prohibited fishing areas to the disadvantage of fishermen.

Jane Gombito, Tanggol Kalikasan information officer, said despite their sustained anti-illegal fishing operations in Tayabas Bay and along the Bicol coast, "we are losing the battle against illegally caught fish, the unlawful operation is still going strong and unabated. Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon

Top Army exec says NPAs using kids as shields

ABOARD personnel carriers make their way in a battalion. Army officers have accused communist guerrillas of using human shields to cover their escape routes.

LUCENA CITY—A TOP OFFICIAL of the armed Force (Southern Luzon Command (Solcom) based here in Camp Malay accused the New People's Army of using children as shields in a recent encounter with government troops in the island town of Infiles in Quezon province.

Quoting a report, Lt. Gen. Alexander Yano, Solcom commander, said government troops on their the Army's 66th infantry Battalion encountered seven armed NPA rebels in the village of Langgayan on Dec. 30.

Yano said that during the gunfight, the soldiers noticed the presence of children in the rebels' positions.

He said the soldiers immediately stopped firing for fear the children might get hit in the crossfire and give the communist guerrillas an opportunity to escape.

"The CPP-NPA were again blamed their session disrupted for the children's rights by using them as shields. They have put the lives of the children in harm's way just so they could escape capture," Yano said.

Government forces recovered one cal. 45 pistol from the rebel's position. No casualty was reported on both sides.

In another report, at least two suspected NPA rebels were arrested and surrendered to the military in separate occasions, the Solcom spokesperson said quoting reports.

Lt. Col. Frederick Pangan identified the rebel surrender as one Michael Milaya alias "Ka Arnel," reportedly a squad leader of the "Romie vs Pango" with code name "Sagaday" under the Komite sa Larangang Gerilya (KGG) 54 of the Communist Party of the Philippines operating in the island province of Romblon.

Pangan said Milaya surrendered to the officials of the Charlie Company of the Army's 74th Infantry Battalion last Dec. 28.

Milaya has a warrant of arrest for the crime of rebellion and has a cash reward of P80,000 for his arrest, according to Pangan.

"He decided to surrender because of the unfair treatment of their higher commanders to the rank-and-file. He claimed that their members are dwindling with many members opting to be inactive," Pangan quoted Milaya.

On Sunday, government troops arrested a certain Louie Rivera y Lazona alias "Ka Arnel" in an operation in the village of Binahan in Pagbilao town.

Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon

Rape-slay cases grip Davao Sur towns in fear

BANSALAN, DAVAO DEL SUR—Police of alleged cult members usually attacking and murdering women has gripped many areas in the province as police authorities were still trying to piece together evidence that could pin down suspects in the murder-slaying of at least three women here.

Another victim surfaced as attack into last month.

The four still unsolved attacks from the alleged cult are further fanned by a lame police report that a 42-year-old woman from Matanao (Davao del Sur) narrowly escaped death on Jan. 4 after having been attacked by a hooded suspect.

Senior Insp. Benilano Abell, Matanao police chief, said Maria Jane the real name) had just entered the toilet at the back of her house in Sitio Cantawa in Barangay Bibiklan around 7 p.m. when she saw a hooded suspect inside.

Abell said based on Maria's account, the suspect slashed her parents and sisters with a knife.

"She was shocked but had immediately recovered. She chased for help, prompting the suspect to flee," he said.

Based on Maria's description, Abell said the suspect was about 20 years old and at least 5'4" in height.

Scores alone motorcycle riding men knocking on doors of houses during the late hours of the morning have also been spreading like wildfire in the province while village officials reported seeing some suspects disappearing into the night.

Eduardo Ebid, New Visayas village chief, said then chased two unidentified persons in the evening of Dec. 26 and Jan. 1 but failed to catch up with them.

He said the men suddenly vanished at whenever were doing in.

Benito Orbita, a resident of Poblacion Uno here, claimed she had a near encounter with the supposed cult members.

Orbita said late last month, she heard knocks on her door but did not open up.

She said when the people at a hide, she saw two hooded-wearing persons.

Orbita said the screamed for help and the men were gone.

Senior Insp. Anastacio Wadi, provincial police director, said they have found no evidence that a cult was behind behind the attacks on women here.

He urged residents not to pass on false information that could only worsen the fear gripping many areas here and in nearby towns.

"Lawless elements can take advantage of their fear to embark on other types of criminality. They must keep in touch with the police for swift response and action," Wadi said.

But in Digos City, police authorities said they were investigating a suspect in connection with the rape-slaying cases.

Senior Insp. Felix Wandi, Digos City police operations chief, said Wilson Lalandaro, 36, married and a resident of Binungay Igpit, Digos City was arrested on Jan. 3 during a routine police inspection of brothers-in-law in city.

He said Lalandaro yielded an unlicensed revolver when arrested.

PO1 Ned Sobrevo, Digos City police investigator, said Lalandaro has admitted he belongs to the Bagindia Cocaine, an anti-communist vigilante group.

But Sobrevo said the suspect denied any involvement in the rape-slaying cases. *Bibit E. Aguirre, Inquirer Mindanao*

Camarines Sur dragon boat race team wins another championship

PILI, CAMARINES SUR—THE championship streak of the Cam-Sur Dragon Boat Team (CDBT) continued when it grabbed the championship in the 2006 Dragon Boat Race Annual Championship Sel Log Round held in December last year at the Baywalk, Roxas Boulevard in Manila.

The CDBT, a pet project of late Late Raymond T. Villafuerte (that showcases local rowers' talents in local and international competitions), achieved its top performance for the fourth time, beating seasoned teams in dragon boat races in the country and in Singapore.

Relatively a rookie in the drag-on boat race, the unprecedented championship streak of the CDBT has been a record breaker in the Philippines since, in a year, it had already defeated teams that were the toast of dragon boat race all-rounder.

The CDBT's power did not escape the attention of foreign competitors in the Asia Spikes Rowing Competition held in Sentosa, but last year in Singapore when it repeated the scholarship of rowers from Canada, United States, Great Britain, Malaysia, Indonesia and the city-state.

In its recent record, the CDBT clocked 2:06.04 in the final heat against the Philippine National Police Rowing Team, the runner-up in the recent race, which clocked 2:07.46.

Another team from Bicol won the third place with a time record of 2:10.46.

The PNP dragon boat team for been the closest rival of the CDBT.

The homegrown crews of Cam-sur have defeated four times the PNP dragon boat team and won the championship in cases, including the Singapore race where the former was the overall champion in all categories in the men's division—200 m and 500 m sprint and 1,000 m race.

"With the skills and talents of the CDBT, I am confident that our dragon boat team, when given proper training, would excel and achieve more victories and high-level competitiveness in international competition," Villafuerte said.

The governor added that the CDBT would be sent to compete in dragon boat races this year in Manila Bay and Boracay and in China.

When the CDBT first competed in the Athens Cup at Manila Bay in March last year, it placed third even as the local rowers were without practice and training.

In its second and relief participation in the dragon boat race in Bay last year in Manila and Boracay, the championship was already in the hands of the local rowers.

But the local rowers' championship streak was eclipsed by its performance in June during the Philippine Olympic Festival when it placed second.

The CDBT regained its top performance in October last year when it reclaimed the championship in the Dragon Boat Race Annual Competition in Baywalk, Manila which was repeated in Singapore, and the same rowers race held in December last year in Manila.

The local rowers were veterans of annual boat races held in Naga City during the religious regional fiesta of Bicol, the Feast of Nuestra Señora de Peñafrancia.

The CDBT members, who had learned to row since their childhood, came from the towns of Camaman, Magarao and Milaor and led by its team coach Ruben Bonal and assistant coach Bernardo Gan, before it.

Leading the team in its championship streak are veterans Gerby Sergasia and signal man Jessie Saay. *Juan Escandor Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon*

THE PRIDE of Camarines Sur, its dragon boat race team, spends time practicing its winning form. The team brought honor to the province and was leading supporter Governor Villafuerte. (PHOTO BY NOEL BORJA)

Pampanga gov turns to 26 village chiefs

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Pampanga Gov. Mark Lapid claimed he got in his side 26 of 29 village chiefs who earlier had pledged support for his rival, Brand Shinnar's Ric Pineda.

In a statement, the first that the 27-year-old governor had issued on his re-election bid, Lapid said the village leaders "pledged unqualified support. Rich and unity" with him during a caucus on Dec. 31.

The statement was accompanied by a photograph showing Lapid and the village leaders flashing the thumbs up sign. The governor called them the "solid blocs of barangay chairmen."

Lapid said they "reiterated their commitment to support only Lakas-CMD candidates in the coming May polls after expressing dismay over the decision of Pampanga Mayor Emerjeld Gordon and Vice Mayor Gran Alfonso de Guia to join [the opposition] and challenge Pineda for the governor-ship."

The photograph carried the caption "Tunay pamanunumpang (Genuine United) Pampa."

The caucus took place after Gordon and Ex-la Cruz led eight councilors, 29 village chiefs and some 7,000 supporters who gathered at the Lubao gym on Sunday to pledge support for Pineda, 53.

In that assembly, Pineda's brother-in-law, Angelito "Jerong" and Rodolfo "Pong" Pineda, came up on stage and rallied support for his.

Bong Pineda's own public appearance was seen as an early bid for signal to the governor and his father, Sen. Manuel "Tito" Lapid.

Sources in the Lapid camp said it was Gordon's mother, Marina, who urged to vote back the village leaders. The minister was absent in the caucus.

The governor has avoided media interviews. *Tonette Orejas, Inquirer Central Luzon*

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo leads the ceremonial drive-through at the Bagsic-Aritao Road improvement Project in Aritao, Nueva Vizcaya on Jan. 2. The road project was one of several that the government completed last year. (PHOTO BY NOEL CELIS/AFP)

Airports among projects on target, says Mendoza

THE ADMINISTRATION OF President Macapagal-Arroyo has completed various infrastructure projects nationwide last year and more are lined up for completion this year, the Department of Transportation and Communications said yesterday.

In a press statement, Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza said the infrastructure projects led to more jobs and growth in trade, agriculture and tourism.

In his statement, Mendoza said the government would continue to pursue many strategic infrastructure projects this year even as it has completed and started many other projects last year vital to the country's economic and social progress.

Some of the projects, including those undertaken in partnership with the private sector, were aimed at decongesting Metro Manila and bringing progress to the provinces.

"Greatly improving our transportation networks is a cornerstone of the government thrust to further improve the economy through commerce, industry and tourism," Mendoza said in a prepared report to Ms Arroyo.

"The bottom line of all of these is the delivery of public service," he said, "providing the foundations for economic growth."

Among the projects were the development of new airports.

The New Bohol Airport is 57 percent complete and will commence commercial operations in April, Mendoza reported. The Bacolod (Silay) Airport project is 60 percent complete and is targeted for completion by July 2007.

The Zamboanga Airport runway overlay is 98 percent complete.

The expansion of the Bicolano Municipal International Airport Passenger Terminal Building is 80 percent complete and will be completed in September.

Among the secondary airports, the upgrading and rehabilitation of Pagadian and Tagbilaran Airports are completed. Being undertaken is the upgrading and rehabilitation of Cotabato, Tuao, Dipolog and Tagaytay Airports which will be completed this year.

Motorcycle assassins gun down Ecija trader

CABANATUAN CITY—A 37-YEAR-old businessman was shot and killed by two motorcycle-riding men in Barangay Aduas Norte here on Tuesday.

Police said Romulo Velasco, owner of a textile and garment store and a restaurant in the city, was driving his car when the men drove by and shot him.

Velasco was a former political leader of Nueva Ecija Rep. Redillo Pajindo.

Police said they were not discounting politics as a motive in the killing although Velasco's last known involvement in political activities was in 2004.

Velasco's earlier case two weeks after Generoso Augustus Santiago, president of the Association of Barangay Captains in the city, was gunned down.

In Balaoan, a former councilor and his wife were shot and wounded on Friday when a group of men attacked them in Barangay Poblacion Balaoan in Sta. Maria town.

Police said Rodolfo de Silva, 52, suffered from bullet wounds in the neck while his wife, Betty Jane, suffered from bullet wounds in the hand. One of the suspects hit the couple's son, Bryan, 29, with a pistol.

They were taken to a hospital in Quezon City.

Police said the Dr Silvas, who were in their car, were entering the family compound at 11:25 a.m. when the suspects, who were wearing camouflage shirts and pants and their faces covered by ski masks, attacked them. The suspects were armed with an M-16 Armalite rifle and .45 cal. and 9mm guns, police said.

Daniel de Silva, a cousin of Dr Silva, said politics could be a motive in the attack as his cousin planned to run for a congressional seat in the province in May.

Dr Silva's relatives said the former councilor has no enemies. The family runs a bakeshop and involved in a trucking business.

In Nueva Ecija, a bus driver was wounded on Thursday when a man aboard a motorcycle shared his bus and shot him along the Maharlika Highway in the Science City of Muñoz.

Police said the suspect twice shot Anselmo Bañal, 41, a driver of a Cagayan Valley-based bus, in full view of students in front of the south gate of the Central Luzon State University (CLSU).

The one among the bus' 20 passengers was hurt in Bañal, although wounded, was able to stop the vehicle.

Bañal suffered bullet wounds in the shoulder and arm and was taken to a hospital in nearby San Jose City.

Police said the suspect could have been angered when the bus almost hit him when it overtook his motorcycle. *Aurelio Rojas and Carmelo Reyes, Inquirer Central Luzon*

INQUIRER Visayas

Editor Jun Escalante
Assoc. Editor Evelyn L. Resurreccion

House of swifts and sweets in Leyte

By Vicente S. Labro
Carigara, Leyte

SWIFTS AND SWEETS COULD HAVE BEEN an appropriate business name, but Filomena Gonzales Enero chose instead her nickname and her delicious food products, which over shadows popular.

Thus, Lanero's Pastillas and Delicacies was registered with the Department of Trade and Industry in 2000, when Enero was about to use a regional trade and food fair for the first time.

Lanero's pastillas de leche is still popular in her hometown in Carigara and nearby other places in Leyte. The pastillas melts in the mouth, so people say, and usually served, along with her other delicacies as dessert during fiestas, weddings, birthdays and other special occasions.

But some people have been going that to Lanero's place one only to buy her products for she to take a glimpse of birds coming in the living room of the renovated house where she and her family live.

The attraction is actually a colony of swifts that flies built nests in the ceiling. "There are now about one hundred pairs of birds among our rafters (nakibot ang mga ...)," Lanero, 56, said in an interview in her home.

Her *pastillas de leche* and other goodies are known far and wide as the best in Leyte

"Balay nangayo"

Neighbors and visitors would often see a flock fluttering through the windows of the old dilapidated house. The small, feathered creatures, about five inches long with designed compact bodies and short neck, on good flyers.

One would see the dark colored birds leaving or landing on their small nests, some feeding a chick and others busy making or repairing their nests, using their saliva as adhesive.

Usually, swifts build nests in caves, hollow trees or thickets. Those of Lanero's are not used to seeing people at close range or even providing oils.

The nests are close to one another. Right below them are newspapers spread on the floor to catch droppings.

According to Lanero, the house did not shelter any bird in the early 1980s when her children were still young and she wasn't even into making sweets, cakes and pastillas.

But for unknown reasons, a couple of birds started making nests on the ceiling.

As time, the house fairly resided down as the nests to drive the birds away permanently. Lanero recalls, "Gusto ng ilang magdi-tindas ang mga kabataan (There were a few kids initially but when their nests were removed their number increased)," she says in Bisaya.

"Dito daw, sa mga ka-a-a (here, in the Lanero Island (her hometown) or island off southern Cebu) and other as-a-a (and, so on) that the birds were already very many," Lanero says.

They decided to just leave the birds alone.

Some businessmen from Cebu, who must have heard of the story, visited the Enero and offered to buy the bird's nests. Since then, the family has been selling the nests to them.

Bird's nest soup, whose main ingredient is the dried bird's saliva, is a popular and expensive delicacy in Asia.

Every six months, Lanero says, about one and a half kilos of bird's nests could be gathered and sold for around P5,000 per kilo. These found in caves command higher prices, according to Benjamin.

Lucky charm

"Some say the birds are lucky charms," Lanero says, referring to her flourishing business.

But many others believe that her food outlet is wound still prosper even without the birds. One big reason, they point out, is that her pastillas de leche and other goodies are known far and wide in the best in Leyte.

The reason her pastillas are so delicious, Lanero confirms, is the main ingredient. According to her, she uses only pure and fresh carabao milk that is regularly supplied by local farmers.

When the volume of sales grew and the business could no longer meet her demand for fresh milk, Lanero went to the National Dairy Center of the Leyte State University in Barugo, Leyte, about 120 kilometers from Carigara, for additional milk supply.

The new producer 4,000 to 5,000 pieces of pastillas a day, aside from the other sales delicacies she bakes at home.

Lanero says that she learned the art of making confectionery values, pastries and sweets from her mother when she was still in high school.

An accountancy graduate from the Divine Word University, Lanero then worked in a farmers' cooperative in Carigara. She got married in the early 1970s and when her child, three were already studying, she decided to quit from work and put up her own processed food business.

She and her husband started their venture in the 1980s, about five years before she went full-time baking, and with a capital of only less than P500. Lanero started making bottles and cinnamon cookies, rosses, dodda, bros, and bruce dyes-yolks.

When some of her customers asked her to make pastillas and cassava cake, Lanero obliged. These, too, became favorites.

She recalled that she would go to banks, hospitals and houses in Tacloban City, about 50 km from Carigara, just to sell her products. Eventually, her efforts paid off.

Flourishing business

With the help of the Department of Trade and Industry, she joined trade and food fairs, such as the Bahandi Regional Trade Fair and Wow Philippines in Metro Manila. She supplies a businessman in Metro Manila with most of her products, and there are sold in several malls and big stores there.

"In the food fair that I recently joined, my showcase was already worth P150,000," she said.

She said she used part of her earnings to buy modern baking equipment. Their three children are now all professionals, with degrees in engineering, accountancy and nursing.

Meanwhile, the lovely small creature continue to fly in and out of their nests to their abodes home along the Bogac River in Carigara.

LANERO Enero (right) shows the packaging for sell of her famous pastillas

Cards, gift tags made by special hands

By Ma. Elena Labrido
Iloilo City

COMPETING WITH PRICEY GIFTS IN ONE of the malls here are homemade cards and gift tags that cost more than their stated prices because they are made by special hands.

Greetings cards in washed colors, one of a kind gift tags and ornament holder decorated with tiny flowers of many colors, are among the items offered by Emmanuel Resource Center, a center for children with special needs.

Buying the gifts is not only helping the children with autism and Down Syndrome, among others, but also sharing with them the joy of beauty. It is also a gesture of respect.

The gift items were made by Marlon, Paulo, Emily and Thessy students in the preventive of program, who are learning life skills so that they can be productive and self-reliant. The skills are also meant to infuse them with cheerfulness and problem-solving skills.

"It is fun to share," said Marlon, 15.

When not drawing, Marlon and his classmates are deep into beadwork, designing colorful plastic beads and fresh water pearl bracelets. For the holidays, they produced greeting cards and gift tags in vibrant colors.

Art therapy

Art and craft are part of the therapy offered by Emmanuel, according to Rosalen Dy Lanza, family called "Teacher Ula, the center's program teacher. "Boys obviously have to work and shop. Every Tuesday, Marlon and her friends go to the market to buy the ingredients they need for their supervised cooking class. They are not chauffeured but they take public transport. What they cook, they eat for lunch.

For Tuesday, the first dish was "Pork Chop Royale." It was not fancy but filling, he said.

Their cooking skills have earned them money and praises. They had been hired to cater to private parties, and a recent opening of a multi-storeying center. What they earn from cooking is divided among them. They spend part of their earnings when they go out on Fridays to hang out in the malls or play bowlingdom.

Dr Lyon said they were thinking of baking the signature cookies for the holiday cards just-needed. Boxes from doing so. Maybe they will launch it on Valentine's Day.

How it started

The Emmanuel Center for Children with Special Needs was established in 1992 as an offshoot of Rodica Friends of the Handicap. It started as a counseling and support center for parents with special children.

The center is founded by Dr. Linda B. Que, mother of a boy with Down Syndrome. She worked hard and used her resources in setting up the center, the only private one in operation in Western Visayas that looks after the needs of children with Down Syndrome, autism, cerebral palsy and developmental delays. Her work has inspired other families to join them.

In 1998, the Emmanuel Center became the Emmanuel Foundation and now handled by Josephine Carson as president. The foundation offers programs on special education, early intervention for babies and toddlers, a rehabilitation program that includes physical therapy, occupational therapy and language stimulation, and the preventive of program for special children, 12 years and above. Being the center, located in M.H. del Pilar Street, Molo district, has 12 teachers.

The center conducts regular home visits, gives training to caregivers, and mainstream grade-school teachers on special education. Informational and advocacy seminars are given to children from poor families.

Dr Lyon said Emmanuel is not a school that gives out diplomas to students. But the lessons taught there meet State-set the pre-academic requirements for special education classes in government schools. At the center, they are taught basic to be considerate and to have with other people. They are also taught the essentials of living.

The crafts and the cooking produced by Marlon and her friends have impressed many. They have been admired for their artistry and determination, and, despite being mentally challenged, they have found a way to present a positive and refreshing image of themselves during the holiday season.

CARD made by special children of Emmanuel Foundation.

FROM LEFT: Thessy, Emily, Marlon, Teacher Aleda and Paulo of the preventive of program of Emmanuel Foundation for Children with Special Needs.

SPORTS

Miranda breathes life into Coca-Cola's bid

Last-second triple keeps gasping Tigers alive

By Manny B. Castillo

GAME TONIGHT: Alaska-Talkmore
8:30 p.m. — Coca-Cola Sta. Lucia
(Ulog Ia — ACT vs Mobile)

DENNIS MIRANDA nailed a three-pointer from deep left corner to beat the game clock last night and give Coca-Cola another chance at life in the Talk 'N Text Philippine Cup.

The 5-foot-10 starting guard claimed a sizzling final minute charge by the Tigers, who dawed one of huge deficits in regulation and a six-point hole in the final minute of overtime for a 99-96 decision against Alaska at the start of sellout action at the Araneta Coliseum.

Coca-Cola actually dawed out with three triples in the final minute, the first one coming from Allan Salangsang, as the Tigers were only five shots clear in the tournament but enough to keep alive their under-dog hopes of advancing to the quarterfinals via the backdoor.

"When you are working hard and enjoying (what you do), sometimes you get lucky," coach Binky Ilarde later said.

The Tigers remained in the bottom of the standings with a 6-11 slate and would need to win two more games to this round to forge a playoff with the second topseeded for a shot at the final quarterfinal berth.

"That's why I told the boys that we needed to win four games, counting the playoff, if we want to make the quarterfinals," Ilarde added. "It's a tall order, yes, because we only won five games in the entire elimination round."

TRAPPED: Coca-Cola's Willie Miller (left) tries to drive past Alaska's Dennis Miranda and Mo Bolanos (with the ball) in the game last night at the Araneta Coliseum. ALAN FRANCISCO

It looked like the Aces had the game in the bag, in two occasions actually, once in regulation and when they raced to a 96-90 lead in overtime after a Willie Miller (unassisted) with 1:24 to go.

Salangsang, just back in the fray only because William Avenido cramped up, hit the first of three triples in the next Coca-Cola offensive, before his second one sandwiched a Sir Bobaco (foul) shot that made it 96-98 entering the final 29 seconds.

Best player

Tony delos Cruz then missed a floating jumper for Alaska on the other end and Salangsang will might gave up the chance to end the game-winner by fouling a wide-open Miranda.

Miranda finished with 18 points, seven rebounds and six assists, but John Arigo was named Player of the Game by the television panel on the strength of a 24-point, seven-rebounds, three-assist and two-steal game.

Arnaiz scored 11 of his 17 points in the third period and was chiefly responsible for keeping the Tigers within striking distance of the down, who dropped to 8-11 and would need to wild their last two games to have a realistic chance of advancing.

But even so, Alaska would still not be assured avoiding elimination if Sta. Lucia, which carried over its 13-8 record into this round, wins just one out of its three assignments here.

Up next for the Tigers, who forged extension at 67 after two 4D Fresh Aire chasers off Bobaco with eight seconds left, would be the Friday-night semifinals.

The Scores

First Game

COCA-COLA 99—Arigo 24, Miranda 18, Arnaiz 17, Pam 15, Salangsang 15, Pascua 8, Bitoka 4, Quiaro 4, Ibeda 2, Nerf, Samuel 2, Somerset.

ALASKA 96—Miller 18, Quiaro 18, Dela Cruz 17, Jones 13, Arenas 10, Pinto 8, Bolanos 8, Lanzo 7, Segunial 2, Magsaysay 1.

Quarters: 20-21, 21-48, 69-69, 91-96, 96-99.

WARMER: Kiamco: Three-time SEAG gold medalist.

Kiamco, Orcollo to participate in Reno 8-ball tilt

MARIES KIAMCO, the most consistent Filipino cue artist in the Southeast Asian Games, will fly to the United States next month to compete in the 2007 Reno 8-ball Open and other major tournaments.

ORCOLLO

The 18-year-old Kiamco, gold medalist in the 1999, 2001 and 2003 SEAG editions, will join defending champion Dennis Orcollo in the Reno Open set Feb. 28 to March 1 in Reno, Nevada, also likely to play in 2005 winner Marlon Manalo.

The sub-spoken Kiamco, of Paoay, Cebu, was slated to play in the 2007 Derby City Classic which gets underway yesterday at Executive West Hotel in Louisville, Kentucky, but failed to get cleaning.

"I've been crying since last November, but all the flights to Kentucky were fully booked," said Kiamco yesterday. "It's a pity as there were many divisions that I would have joined."

Kiamco missed the 2005 Mexico Southwest Asian Games, where the country was adjudged the overall champion in cue events, because he was competing in the US circuit that time.

In preparation for his overseas campaign this year, Kiamco played amateur Efren "Bata ng" Reyes in a series of money game matches.

Reyes managed to join the Derby City Classic with Geraldo Francisco "Lolenge" Sumaoang and Candy Jalle.

Kiamco beat Orcollo in the finals of the 2005 All Asian Open in Osaka, Japan, to pocket the 1 million yen top purse. The event was dominated by Filipinos with Round Gallego and Antonio Lim reaching the last four seats.

Skipping world champion Dennis Orcollo, Orcollo and fellow Filipino Carlo Biado are scheduled to play in the All Japan Open on Jan. 20-21.

Defending champion Alonzo Tanaka and Asian Games 8-ball winner Satoshi Kawahara will base on the host country's campaign.

Meanwhile, Roberto Gomez and Rodolfo Dela will try their luck in the 8-ball Tuesday of Scandinavia on Jan 17 in Oslo, Norway. Marlon Bernardino

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WVL lures 47 squads, gets going tomorrow

FORTY-SEVEN TEAMS WILL BE FOR SCHOOLS IN the 2006 Pinoyako's Volleyball League (WVL) starting at 7:00 a.m. tomorrow at the Easter School Sports Complex in Greenhills, San Juan.

Competition will be held in competitive and developmental levels of elementary and high school, according to tournament commissioner Hernando Dacono and his assistant, Alandeza Jocelyn.

The tourney organized by BEST Center and sponsored by Alfin has lured 21 elementary school teams and 14 high school squads.

Participating in the elementary competitive level are Colegio San Agustin, Mercedarian School, Mariano College, PWU-JASMS, Sacred Heart Novena (C), Children Prep School, Golden Tambourine Christian School, Holy Family, Holy Trinity Academy and St. Scholastica's College.

High School—Assumption College, Holy Family School, School of St. Anthony, Brent College, St. Mary's College, St. Scholastica's College-Manila, St. Theresa's College-Quezon City, Antipolo Lady of Lourdes, Provida Learning Center, PWU-JASMS, San Antonio de Padua College-Pila, Laguna, San Beda College-Alabang A and B, Jesus Academy of Malabon.

Vying in the developmental level are:

Elementary—Assumption College, Brent School Elementary School, Cap Spring Academy, Xavier College and Southville International School.

High School—Assumption Antipolo, Notre Dame of Greater Manila, Ken-yeh Gene Montessori, Ford Academy, BIC-Malanay B, St. Joseph School Fairview Inc., St Scholastica's College-Manila B, St. Theresa's College-QC B, Hospicium College, Cecilia School of St. Mark, Cap Spring Academy, Holy Trinity Academy, Immaculate Heart of Mary, La Salle College Antipolo, New Era University-QC-Kind and Southville International School.

Aplus METRO
Peter Dean G. Dipasupil

1 killed, 3 hurt in Parañaque City demolition job

Clash erupts between MMDA, Baclaran community residents

A DEMOLITION team tore down this bridge leading to a Muslim community in Baclaran, resulting in a clash between residents and men from the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority. [illegible]

By Jocelyn R. Uy
[illegible]

A 15-YEAR-OLD BOY WAS killed and three others were seriously injured from gunshots when the demolition team of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority clashed yesterday morning with residents of a Muslim neighborhood in Baclaran, Parañaque City.

Supt. Ronald Ballos, city police chief, identified the fatality as Jomar Sangcalan.

The victim died at the San Juan De Dios Hospital, where the other casualties were brought, late afternoon yesterday.

Victims

The others who were injured were identified by Muslim leaders as Abu Gapur, 20; Cabil Co-mama, 27, and Aaron Abdul Lodji, 22.

They were treated for gunshot wounds at the San Juan De Dios Hospital.

Caught

Details about, especially on Aaron, reportedly assigned to the MMDA cleaning operations, a now under investigation after he was caught with a .45 caliber pistol near the Baclaran Church yesterday afternoon.

Footbridge

Bobby Esquivel, head of the MMDA Cleaning Operations Group, said operators yesterday they were turning down toward the morning footbridge connecting the community of some 5,000 residents to Roxas Boulevard.

CONTINUED ON A

2 fires hit Metro; 2 kids injured

By Nancy C. Carvajal
and Edwin C. Tamboy Jr.

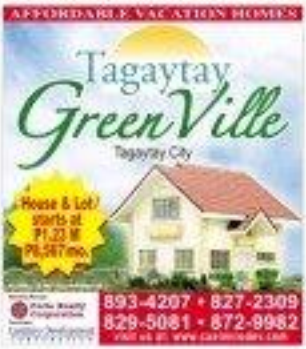
TWO CHILDREN WERE HURT IN two separate fires that occurred after midnight and early morning yesterday in Caloocan City.

In Bagumbayan No. Tomas in Pasig City, a 3-year-old boy playing with matches accidentally started a fire that razed their decades-old two-story house.

In Caloocan, meanwhile, arson investigator Senior Fire Officer 2 Dido Orienzano said the latest fire in the city brought to four the number of incidents in the city since the beginning of the year.

The number of casualties in Caloocan fires since the beginning of the year now total five.

Damage caused by these two fires [illegible]



'NBI could help link suspect to two slay cases'

By Marjoe C. Orlo

THE SUSPECT IN THE MURDER of an ABS-CBN executive producer in November could also be involved in the brutal killing of a cabinet scandal.

An agent of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) said yesterday the name of member victim, Washington Parlan, 34, of No. 248 Sto. Rosario, Plaridel, Bulacan, Gang City, said suspect Alfie Cabanatuan was last heard in South Korea and the police suspect in the killing.

The suspect allegedly with other into P1,000 from the victim's ATM account.

Special Investigator Armand Elvidar of the NBI Anti Kidnapping Group, Hijacking, Armed Robbery Division, said Parlan's family sought the bureau's assistance after the victim was killed in May.

Elvidar said that according to witnesses, an robed Parlan paid for Cabanatuan's bicycle that around 8 p.m. on May 15, 2006 before they entered the victim's house.

Members of Parlan's family discovered the crime around 7 a.m. the following day when they noticed the victim's face was covered with a pillow.

"When they removed the pillow, they discovered that Parlan's forehead was bashed in," Elvidar said.

Elvidar added that a neighbor saw the suspect leave the victim's house with a backpack on the night of the crime.

The victim, who also worked as personnel manager of Mercelite in Mandaluyong City, had around P1,000 bills in cash, two cell phones, and its stolen case containing important documents.

STREET MINSTREL
A familiar sight along Kalayaan Avenue in Quezon City is this man who makes afternoons more pleasant by playing popular tunes on his guitar for passersby. [illegible]

Casinos not allowed in Pasig City, says Eusebio

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

[illegible]

"I will not allow any gambling den in this city. I have not issued a permit and I will not issue a permit for a casino," Eusebio told the business yesterday.

Barangay Rosario lagoweed Victorino Oliveo had earlier issued a temporary business permit to a new 3-storey-and building beside a mechanic shop in the city but been set up for casino operations.

Oliveo said he got the information about its operations from his friends at Malacañang.

Staff members of the Malacañang Administration told the barangay that the building was already outside their jurisdiction and that they have nothing about the alleged casino.

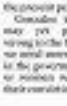
"This is all about the dignity of our city. We are just recovering from the stigma caused by the discovery of shabu manufacture last year," Oliveo said.

The two-story building looks new, with its fresh coat of white paint. The ground floor is still relatively unfurnished. Workers on the site however refused to talk about what they were building.

Dalmel Mobile Force chief Supt. Leander Laragdaine, whose office is right in front of the building, said he was told the building would soon open as a "sports club."

Eusebio, however, said the businessmen who supported the building yesterday found nothing in the building to show casino games were being placed there.

Justice Secretary Gonzalez's guts



ON TARGET
Newman Tayko

[illegible]

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The movie AGENT X44 opens January 17 at Ayala Malls Cinemas.

Glorietta

2 fires hit Metro; 2 kids injured

From page A17

He was first in the fire that broke out around 12:05 a.m. in a residential area in Phase 8, Package 34, Bagong Silang.

Casimiro said the fire razed seven houses in his area and badly in the area from the left to least four families' homes.

The fire allegedly started in the house of one Arnold Regala.

Estimated damage was placed at about half a million pesos.

Candles

The fire investigator said the cause of the fire was still being investigated though some of the neighbors said it could be due to unattended candles.

The other fire occurred around 3 a.m. yesterday displacing 48 families and destroying at least 10 houses in Mabini Street between 8th and 9th Avenues in Caloocan City.

No one was reported hurt, but damage to property was placed at P1.5 million.

On Wednesday, some 50 families were displaced when a fire broke out in Barangay 86, Quiaoit, Caloocan.

On Thursday, some P1 million worth of property were up in smoke when a fire broke out in a convenience store on the ground floor of a four-story building also in Bagong Silang.

Jose Catalino, a resident, ordered an unknown bystander while trying to save some belongings from the burning house, investigators said.

No escape

Two fire fighters were also reportedly injured and a house in Malabon was affected.

The house was for allegedly started in the house of one Amado Bondoc.

Nobody was hurt in the fire that began at 9:37 a.m. but it caused more than P500,000 worth of damage to property. 911 Subcode Hotline received the incident.

Dangerous game

He said the fire was playing with matches in a bedroom on the upper floor of the house owned by his grandfather, Lamberto Lee, while his mother was on the ground floor of the house on Del Pilar Street.

The family managed to leave the burning house unharmed, the investigator added.

Fire fighters managed to contain the fire at 9:55 a.m.

NEW PLAYGROUND
Children enjoy in the new house park in Barangay Barangka Ilaya, Mandaluyong City. Right: Some parks in the city were opened to the public by Mayor Reynaldo M. Gonzales II with the support of the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission.

1 killed, 3 hurt . . .

From page A17

[illegible]

Response

The group said the MMDA [illegible] to Eat Bulaga! Magdal said.

Pasay police chief Supt. Marcelino Valerio said the MMDA [illegible] of about 20 people in uniform and plain-clothes.

But Mahamudi Ismail, a member of the neighborhood security and force, said the guards were from the MMDA operatives.

Nobody fired from our compounds but some residents hurled bottles at the MMDA to prevent them from moving down our bridge," Ismail said in an interview.

Access

The footbridge made of wood and bamboo was the community's only access to and from their homes, Ismail said.

The residents said they had requested the MMDA to postpone the demolition in Hidalgo from other parts of Metro Manila were going to their campaign yesterday topic.

Dealer Tuga, Mary Dimaria, chief of the Bulacan operations, said there was no exchange of gunfire between the two groups.

MMDA General Manager Bobbi Nicolasora, on the other hand, said yesterday the agency's personnel could not have initiated the violence in Bulacan.

Constant threat

He said MMDA personnel were, in fact, the victims of constant threat.

Nicolasora said his MMDA personnel had fled and other in panel in MMDA clearing operations for the past two years.

He said clearing crews were always manned never to go anywhere alone, as they were constantly targets of vendors who might have been cited by the agency's clearing operations.

Easy to spot

"They (MMDA people) are in uniform and they are easily identifiable," said Nicolasora.

"Why would they place their lives in jeopardy by starting something," the MMDA official added.

MetroBriefs

Tug-of-war

[illegible]

Brutal end

[illegible]

Las Piñas priority

[illegible]

More coup rumors rattle Bangkok; calm urged

BANGKOK—THE NEW YEAR holiday that killed three people in the Thai capital was part of a concerted bid to undermine the post-coup government, the army chief said on Friday after rumors of another military putsch swept the city.

"It is a movement to disrupt the national security, the society and the economy," Army Chief Sonthi Boonyaratglin, who staged a Sept. 19 coup against Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, said on state-run Channel 5 television.

Late on Thursday, as rumors of major movements of about 2,000 troops in 300 tanks around Bangkok sped through its nine million inhabitants, Sonthi denied any plots to unseat the post-coup administration and the Council for National Security (CNS), in the coup nominal is now called.

As a measure of the panic, one theory was that the CNS was staging a coup against itself to boost its prestige and stem other problems, some months in charge, which culminated in the unprecedented New Year's Eve bombings.

"These issues are doing everything they can to discredit the Sept. 19 coup. They are doing everything to show that the country is in chaos and the CNS can't restore peace to the extent promised," Sonthi said.

They are trying to sell the people that the CNS and the government have no credibility."

The rumors were turned during the Friday morning rush hour, but his appeal for calm failed initially to close the concerns of investors, who dumped Thai stocks for the third straight day.

"Sentiment has been poor, without truly clear cluster of strong a rebound anytime soon. People are scared unnecessarily."

They has been so much bad news there has been bond price selling," Chaiyapon Sompiboonsiri of Bangkok Securities said.

Despite the government's indirect but pointed criticism, the "power" were behind the blasts, a Cabinet minister said on Friday, without specifically naming former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, the authorities appear to have no concrete evidence.

Sonthi was adamant on Friday that the assassinations would never be caught, as they would have direct contact with their operatives on the ground. "I can't identify who they are yet, but the main thing is to do the work to bring the best but political benefits," he said.

Army-installed Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont told the country again on Friday to have confidence in a report of the bomb attacks, which killed three people and injured 36 the work of Muslim police and soldiers. Reuters

Explosives found in Spain's Basque region

GRAIN'S Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero walks past debris as he tours the scene of an car bombing in front the Cut building at the Terminal Four building in Madrid, Thursday, Jan. 4. AP

BILBAO—IN A FRESH BLOW to hopes of peace, police in Spain's Basque region Thursday found a car packed with explosives, just days after a bomb blew at Madrid airport claimed by the separatist group ETA.

The vehicle contained some 90 kilos (200 pounds) of explosives, which were "not pointed to go off," a regional government spokesperson told AFP, adding that the car was probably abandoned by ETA members after a cache of detonators and explosives was found in the northern town of Amorebieta earlier. EFE

The discovery of the explosives, taken on come just hours after Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero vowed to dump cut relations in the wake of last Sunday's attack.

The huge blast in an airport carpark left one Ecuadorian man dead and a companion missing, presumed dead. Both men were sleeping in their cars when the bomb went off following three phone warnings, one of which claimed responsibility in ETA's name.

A Spanish Royal Air Force plane flew home to Ecuador the remains of the dead man, 35-year-old Antonio Palate, on Thursday evening.

Palate was the first fatality in an ETA operation since 2003. The armed Basque separatist force been blamed for more than 800 deaths in a violent campaign for independence stretching back to 1968.

By Thursday afternoon the airport station had still to issue a statement explaining the incident behind the airport blast, which broke a nine-month ceasefire that ETA had said would be permanent.

"I am more determined than ever to devote my energy to trying to end violence and achieving peace," Zapatero said as he visited the blast site.

Of course, "have a right to a life without bombs or violence," Zapatero said, who plans to revisit his ambitious strategy.

Madrid observed a day of mourning for Palate when a small group of people gathered outside the town hall to pay silent tribute.

There were similar small rallies in the Basque country and regional president Juan José Ibarretxe intended one in the administrative capital Vitoria.

Zapatero's spokesperson said he would address parliament—though "not immediately"—in response to demands from the main conservative opposition Popular Party (PP) to explain how his contact with politics will now evolve.

The Socialist government had to discontinue negotiations to hold a dialogue with ETA and preparatory talks involving government representatives had been held both before and after the group's March 22 ceasefire announcement.

Moreover, after the airport attack, Interior Minister Alfredo Pérez Rubalcaba said the peace initiative was "broken and liquidated, finished," even as ETA's political wing Batasuna was insisting that the process was still alive. AFP

New WHO chief says women, Africa top focus

CHAN AP

GENEVA—MARGARET CHAN took up her position as the new head of the World Health Organization on Thursday and said she wanted her leadership to be judged on how she helps improve the health of women and Africans.

The 59-year-old is the first Chinese to leave United Nations body. Chan was named director general of the WHO head two months ago following the unexpected death of her South Korean predecessor Lee Jong-Wook.

"I want my leadership to be judged by the impact of our work on the health of my population-wise and the people of Africa," she told reporters.

She said she did not see politics as mainstream development agenda, but that making advances such as the WHO's Health and Child Health programs would be used as yardsticks to measure progress.

Chan, who is described as "no-nonsense but efficient" by one diplomat who has followed her star, also highlighted the need for an cross-cut concept.

A new pandemic would have disastrous consequences, especially in countries with weak healthcare systems and where the population already suffers from high diseases such as HIV/AIDS, she said.

"The next pandemic, if it occurs, will be very devastating ... we are very concerned of the likelihood of a pandemic," she warned.

Chan was pleased in 1997 for her tough stance on an outbreak of avian flu in Hong Kong, when she served as the Chinese territory's health czar chief. She ordered some will chicken and other chickens which, though outwardly healthy, were subsequently confirmed with international press.

The relationship with Beijing will now be closely watched by the rest of the world at a time of growing Chinese political and economic influence.

When nominated in November, she insisted she would be impartial and not beholden to China, which has come under fire for its perceived lack of transparency and cooperation with the WHO over the threat of bird flu within its borders.

Returning to the point on Thursday, she said that she felt her background made her instantly placed to deal with the concerns on Beijing on some issues.

"I truly believe that of all people I would be in a better position to discuss with the Chinese authorities the sharing of specimens and of samples," Chan said.

The new chief of the WHO, which is governed by its 193 member states, said the organization must change in order to meet the concerns of its members, but that "an upheaval, a revolution" was not on the cards.

"We need to have a organization which is ... transparent, accountable and nimble," she said. AFP

In US, embezzlement in many Catholic dioceses

A SURVEY BY BOOKKEEPERS AT Villanova University has found that a surprising 80 percent of Roman Catholic dioceses that responded had discovered embezzlement of church funds in the last five years, with 31 percent reporting losses of more than $100,000 had been stolen.

The Catholic Church has some of the most rigorous financial guidelines of any denomination, specially in church offices said, but the survey found that the guidelines are often ignored in parishes. And when no one is looking, the cash that goes into the collection plate does not always get deposited into the church bank account.

"In a hierarchical organization, we place a lot of trust in our fellow," said Chuck Zech, a member of the study and director of the Center for the Study of Church Management at Villanova University in Pennsylvania.

"We think if you look for a church—pastor, a volunteer or a priest—the last thing on your mind is to do something dishonest," he said. "But people are people, and there's lot of temptation there, and with the cash-based aspect of how churches operate, it's pretty easy."

Specialists in church ethics said they believe this is the first study to assess the extent of embezzlement in a denomination.

Officials at the US Conference of Catholic Bishops said they had seen the study, which was released just before Christmas and was first reported in the National Catholic Reporter, and were already considering ways that parishes could tighten their financial controls.

"The Villanova study does not come as a surprise," said Bishop Dennis M. Homan, treasurer of the bishops' conference. "This is something that the bishops in this country have been looking at for some time," said Homan, who heads the Duluth, Minn., diocese. "They are aware of a need to look for mechanisms that can avoid problems as accountability and transparency."

Zech said the committee, Robert Miner, a professor of accounting at Villanova, did not set out to look for embezzlement. They were conducting a study of internal financial controls for Catholic dioceses, and some bishops of parishes in which there were allegedly embezzlement, which cost the national offices in the nation's 194 Catholic dioceses of them, 70 responded. Zech said he was surprised that so many dioceses had detected embezzlement. In 30 percent of those cases, police records were filed.

Parishes and high schools handle many cash transactions, making them vulnerable to theft, the US bishops report notes. AP

2007 could be world's warmest year

BOTH front and center view the buildings on the crescent of Mount Washington in New Hampshire Jan. 3. The summit is 6,288 feet above sea level and is home to a weather station that forecasts some of the most brutal weather conditions in the United States. AP/AFP

LONDON—GLEAMING DROUGHT in Australia, foreign typhoons in Asia, Floods in Latin America.

British climate scientists predict that a resurgent El Niño climate trend combined with ever-higher levels of greenhouse gases could propel 2007 into the hottest recorded climate—and make 2007 the warmest year on record.

"Even a moderate El Niño warming event is enough to push the global temperature into new ranges," said Phil Jones, director of the Climatic Research unit at the University of East Anglia.

The warmest year on record is 1998, when the average global temperature was 58.3 degrees Fahrenheit (14.6 degrees Celsius) or 1.1 degrees (0.6 degrees C) above the long-term average of 14 degrees C (57.2). Though such a change appears small, incremental differences can, for example, affect the fertility of plants by causing pollen to become sterile.

There is a 50 percent chance that the average global temperature for 2007 will match or break that record, Britain's Meteorological Office said Thursday. The conservative estimate of the high temperatures could be hit worldwide.

El Niño, which is now under way in the Pacific Ocean and is expected to last until May, occurs irregularly every 3-7 years, when the trade winds—that blow east to west across the tropical Pacific—weaken or reverse. The Pacific ocean can be more intense. The Geneva-based Air Organization has reported that during Indonesia's recent rainy season—good news for Pacific's orange growers, for example.

"The short-term effects of global warming on crop production are very uncertain," said Daniel Bilbao, a researcher at Columbia University's Center for Climate Systems Research in New York. "Future agriculture will depend on how we adapt to climate change."

"El Niño is an independent variable," Jones said. "But the underlying trends in the warming of the earth is almost certainly due to the release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere."

Another most immediate effect of the rising temperatures may be political.

Australian Prime Minister John Howard is already under fire for refusing to link his country's drought to global warming. In Britain, friends of the Earth campaign director Mike Childs said the weather service's 2007 prediction "underlined the gap between the British government's rhetoric and action."

Other environmental groups said the new report added weight to the movement to control greenhouse gases.

It came only a day after the weather service reported that 2006 was hottest year British weather year since 1659, and three months after Sir Nicholas Stern, a senior government economist, warned that the effects of climate change could eventually cost nations 5 percent to 20 percent of global gross domestic product each year.

Figures for 2006 are not yet complete, but the weather service said temperatures were high enough to rank amongst the top 10 hottest years on record.

The evidence that we're doing something very dangerous with the climate is now amazing," said Greenpeace Against Climate Change coordinator Philip Thornhill.

"We need to cut the density and penalty time, distract change's that is being put into a war effort," he said. "It's political struggle to get action done—and these reports help." AP

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS
Intramuros, Manila

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Sealed applications for eligibility and bid documents for the supply and delivery of ballot paper for use in the May 14, 2007 elections shall be received at the COMELEC Session Hall, 5th floor, Palacio del Gobernador, Intramuros, Manila, on January 22, 2007 at 10:00 A.M., at which place, date and time, said sealed bids shall be opened in the presence of the members of the COMELEC Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), representatives of the COMELEC, Commission on Audit, Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting, the participating bidders and the public, with an approved budget of two hundred ninety seven million (Php 297,000,000.00) pesos, charged against the appropriations for the Programs/Activities in connection with the May 14, 2007 National and Local Elections.

A pre-bid conference shall be held on January 8, 2007, 10:00 A.M. at the COMELEC Session Hall, 5th floor, Palacio del Gobernador, Intramuros, Manila.

Bid documents and specifications may be obtained during regular office hours, beginning January 3, 2007, from the Property Division, upon payment with the COMELEC Cash Division, of a non-refundable amount of ten thousand (Php 10,000.00) pesos.

Bids must be accompanied by a Bidder's Bond equivalent to one per centum (1%) of the offer, bid, tender or quotation, in the form of cash or manager's/cashier's check payable to "Commission on Elections".

Full delivery shall be made within thirty (30) days from receipt of the Notice of Award (receipt when as indicated in the Bidder's Tender).

The COMELEC reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any formal defect or irregularities, and accept the lowest complying and responsible bid that is most advantageous to the COMELEC. Likewise, COMELEC reserves the right to review the qualifications of the bidders after the opening and before the contract is awarded. Should such review uncover any change in the situation of the bidder to materially downgrade the substance of such statements, the COMELEC shall disqualify the bidder upon due notice without any claim whatsoever or the part of the COMELEC for any expense he has that may be incurred by the bidder in the preparation of its bid.

December 28, 2006

[illegible]
Chairman
Bids and Awards Committee

The WORLD

Editor Lorenzo B. Tiongco

Democrats take control of Congress

HOLDS Speaker Nancy Pelosi, sixteen her remarks at a gathering celebrating her also first as the first woman speaker of the House of Representatives and second in line to the presidency, Jan. 4, in Washington. AP

WASHINGTON—IN A DAY OF TRANSITION AND pageantry, exultant Democrats on Thursday took control of both houses of Congress for the first time in a dozen years and elected the first woman speaker of the House.

Rep. Nancy Pelosi of California took the speaker's gavel at 3:08 p.m. from Rep. John B. Boehner of Ohio, the Republican leader, whom she defeated by a vote of 233-202, the margin of the new Democratic majority. The House floor and the packed galleries erupted in cheers when the vote was finally announced. Even Republicans grudgingly endorsed the unprecedented nature of the day in which a woman, ascended to power on Capitol Hill by rising as one to applaud her.

"This is an historic moment," Pelosi said in her first remarks as speaker of the 110th Congress. "It's an historic moment for the Congress. It's an historic moment for the women of America. It is a moment for which we have waited for over 200 years."

Seventy-one women will serve in the House, a record.

Earlier in the day, on the other side of the Capitol dome, Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., became majority leader, following his party's one-seat victory margin in the November elections.

Vice President Dick Cheney, in his constitutional role as president of the Senate, dutifully came in the members, including 10 new senators, only one of them a Republican, Bob Corker of Tennessee.

Both Reid and Pelosi promised a new era of cooperation after years of partisan policies and gridlock. "Excited by the spirit of bipartisanship," Reid said. "Democrats are ready to take this country in a new direction."

But there were signs, too, of divisions among Democrats. Democrats have hard to push to smile the first of 12 years of Republican rule in the Congress and six years under President Bush.

In her remarks, Pelosi delivered the obligatory promise of partnership with Republicans, but she immediately added a blunt warning to Bush on the war in Iraq.

The first order of business for the new Democratic-led House was a series of measures designed to more tightly regulate relations between lawmakers and lobbyists. Next week, they plan to enact a 100-hour blitz of legislation to raise the minimum wage, 101 resolutions on federal financing of embryonic stem cell research, and allow the government to negotiate price cuts with pharmaceutical companies for the Medicare prescription drug program, among other matters. Some Democrats also plan to pass legislation curbing interest rates on student loans and rolling back subsidies for oil and gas producers.

In an early sign of bipartisanship, Democratic Sen. Max Baucus of Montana and Sen. Charles E. Grassley, R-Iowa, on Thursday introduced a bill to repeal the individual alternative minimum tax, which is imposing an increasingly heavy tax burden on middle-income taxpayers. NYT

For Democrats, a choice: Forward or reverse

WASHINGTON—DEMOCRATS REALIZED their political and legislative dream Thursday. Now they must face reality.

As they take control of the House and Senate, members of the new majority must reconcile diverse ideological tensions within their ranks and make a fundamental choice. They can spend their energy trying to reverse what they see as the flaws of the Bush administration and a decades years in which conservative philosophy dominated Congress. Or they can accept the rightward tilt of that period and grudgingly concede that big tax cuts, deregulation, restrictions on abortion and other Republican-inspired changes are now a permanent part of the legislative landscape.

The competing drives were on display until the constitutional hoopla on Thursday and the emotion surrounding Rep. Nancy Pelosi's election as speaker, a position filled until now by the likes of Sam Rayburn, Joseph Cannon and Nicholas Longworth—men whose names echoed nearby House office buildings. "We have broken the marble ceiling," Pelosi said after she was handed the gavel.

In a meeting with the Congressional Black Caucus earlier in the day, Pelosi made her own allusions to the competing tugs on Democrats, noting the party was rooted in its traditions but not hostage to the past. She viewed a new direction "for all the people, not just the privileged few," a reflection of the leadership's political and policy calculation, that Democrats need to champion the average guy.

"The agenda we have is about ensuring economic security to a very vulnerable middle class," said Rep. Rahm Emanuel of Illinois, chair of the Democratic Caucus. "The real activity will be in those areas."

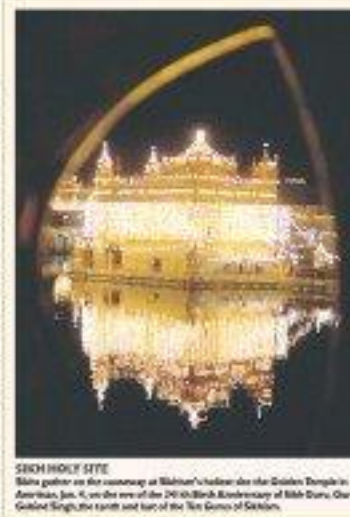
Yet many Democrats contend that President Bush and the Republican Congress that was his partner moved too far left for the right to many voters, and they believe it will be the work of Democrats to make a significant course correction.

"I think there are a lot of things the people of America want changed," said Sen. Patrick J. Leahy, D-Vt., the new chair of the Judiciary Committee and a tough critic of some Bush policies. He and others made clear that the new direction has to begin with American policy in Iraq.

But Democrats are in no rush to engage in a fight with Bush over the ideological contemporary of his domestic policy, his tax cuts. And they have showed no inclination to wade back into the abortion issue, despite its potency among many of their supporters.

"We have to keep our eye on the average American family and part of path made the universal groups left, right and center," said Sen. Charles E. Schumer, D-N.Y. "The world has changed, and it demands new solutions, not the old Democrats and Republicans sort most."

New York Times News Service



SIKH HOLY SITE

Golden palace on the anniversary at Sikhism's holiest site the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Jan. 4, on the eve of the 240th Birth Anniversary of Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and last of the Ten Gurus of Sikhism. AP

Car seats for infants often fail in crashes

WASHINGTON—CAR SEATS for infants often fail to withstand the impact when a vehicle is struck by another from the side, according to laboratory tests conducted by Consumer Reports.

Of the 20 models tested in simulations of such impacts, 13 failed, some "disastrously," the magazine reported in its February issue.

The seats have a base that is installed in the car, and a detachable carrier in which the baby is strapped. In the simulations, the seats often separated from the base and slidded across the laboratory, Consumer Reports said.

The seats are rear-facing models of the kind intended for infants up to 1 year old, or about 22 pounds. The government requires manufacturers to test such seats for head-on collisions, but not for broadside crashes, which kill about 300 infants a year in the United States.

It is not clear from the tests how many of those deaths could be avoided with better seats. The magazine tested the seats at 38 miles an hour, the speed at which the government tests cars for protection of adults.

Nicole R. Nason, administrator of the government's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, said the agency was working to develop its own infant-seat tests for broadside crashes.

The magazine also found flaws in a much acclaimed system, required by the government in all new cars since 2002, that helps stabilize baby seats in cars. Indeed, some child seats performed worse with the Latch hardware than when left to place by new tethers. The traffic safety agency said it would hold a public meeting next month to discuss how to improve the Latch system. NYT

Half of Britain's warships to be mothballed, report says

LONDON—ALMOST HALF OF the British Royal Navy's warships are to be mothballed as the Ministry of Defense tries to slash costs, the Daily Telegraph reported on Friday.

Prime Minister Tony Blair's government has admitted that 13 warships are in a state of "reduced readiness" and six further destroyers and frigates are being prepared for cuts, the paper said.

The move comes as ministers reportedly try to cut the defense budget by 200 million pounds (371 million euros, $488 million) and avoid major armed forces commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"What this means is that we are now no better than a coastal defense force or a fleet of dogcoal cutters.

"The Dutch now have a better navy than us," said an unnamed senior officer.

It is likely that the six destroyers and frigates will eventually be sold or scrapped, while there are also fears that two new aircraft carriers promised in 1998 will never be built, the paper said.

Unnamed high ranking officers said the report it was possible that the navy would therefore lose one of its major commitments around the world in new waters.

It also quoted unnamed defense officers saying that two of eight destroyers on the order books will not be bought and added that one of Britain's three major ports was under threat.

The former head of the Royal Navy, Sir Alan West, told the Sunday Telegraph last month that the government was putting British interests at risk by reshaping the armed forces to wage long-term campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Mail was bolstering "the three major companies" which fail to invest in major equipment programs and was running the risk of turning the armed forces into "a gendarmerie." This latest embarrassing report of defense underfunding comes the day after the government was criticized for over claims that it was failing to provide decent accommodation for troops.

An MoD spokesperson said that "no decisions" had yet been taken on the future of the ships and labeled the report as a possible leak. Ministers are "considering options." AFP

Israel raids Ramallah, kills four

RAMALLAH, WEST BANK—ISRAELI forces launched a rare raid into the West Bank city of Ramallah on Thursday, killing four Palestinians, while a spate of factional fighting among Palestinians in Gaza left six dead.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, a Hamas leader, held late-night talks in Gaza in try to defuse tensions. Militant officials said.

It was their first meeting in about two months.

The Ramallah operation was a standoff over a wanted Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak held a few hours later in Egypt to explore remaining stalled Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking.

Attacks were now around Ramallah after Israeli armored vehicles and bulldozers, clanking tracks rolled into some the main Manara Square, pushed into the city to carry out what an Israeli army spokesperson called "routine arrest activity." He said four wanted men had been detained.

The raid was the biggest in Ramallah, the seat of the Palestinian government, since May, when four Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces. Palestinians responded to the latest incursion with gunfire and rocks as policemen fled for safety.

Hospital officials said three Palestinians were killed outright and a fourth died later in hospital. At least 25 other people wounded before Israeli forces withdrew.

"The operation proves that Israeli calls for peace and security are false," Abbas said.

In fighting between rival Palestinian groups in the Gaza Strip, a policeman loyal to the governing Hamas movement was killed by gunmen from Abbas's Fatah faction.

Sharing the shooting on bodyguards of Colonel Mohammed Ghanem of the Preventive Security Service, Hamas gunmen then emptied his home, killing the officer and four of his men and wounding his wife, in the northern Gaza town of Beit Lahiya.

Clashes also erupted in the nearby Jabalya refugee camp and at least 30 people were wounded, hospital officials said.

Violence has surged in Gaza since Abbas challenged Hamas by calling on Dec. 15 for early parliamentary and presidential elections after talks on forming a unity government failed.

Haniyeh and earlier he and Abbas were hoping to meet.

"I thinked all gunmen whichever from the western and east all around display immediately," he told reporters. "I call all parties to resort only to dialogue to resolve political differences." Gunmen said they feared that Haniyeh's death would lead to a sharp spike in internecine fighting. Israel said it would have resolved with calls from militants appealing to Fatah and Hamas to pull back from the brink. Reuters

CLOSE relatives of Osama Murar grieve during his funeral in the Deir al-Balah refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, Jan. 4. Murar is one of four Palestinians, including a 21-year-old woman, who were killed yesterday in Gaza as simmering factional tensions boiled over in the volatile coastal strip, medics and security sources said. AP

WHAT'S INSIDE
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Manny, 7 others named PSA Athletes of the Year

BANGAN NG LAHI: Manny Pacquiao, far-the clear impact of his ring exploits

Sportswriting fraternity also honors 3 reigning world champs, 4 Asian Games gold medalists

EIGHT GALLANT MEN, WITH a ferocious warrior at the helm, stood at the forefront of a season rich in success and high points for Philippine sports.

Boxing superstar Manny Pacquiao, pool champion Efren "Bata" Reyes and Boxing Alcano, bowler Biboy Rivera and Asian Games gold medallists Ivan Tipon, Marlon Payla, Jessie Catiglan and Peter Cataldo did the country proud with their respective exploits and, together, helped make 2006 a truly memorable one for the entire Filipino people.

Their heroic deeds deserved nothing but the highest honor from the Philippine Sportswriters Association (PSA), which selected all eight personalities as its 2006 Athletes of the Year in the PSA-SMC Annual Awards on January 18 at the Mall of Asia.

The score was another unprecedented one for the 68-year-old association after it bestowed on Team Philippines the Athlete of the Year honor in 2005 following the country's historic, first-ever overall championship in the Doha Asian Games.

On top of the highest award to be presented on this eight-man roster, Pacquiao will also be the recipient of the once-in-a-lifetime PSA Hall of Fame Trophy in recognition of his inspiring victories over Mexican boxing legend Erik Morales that brought boundless joy to an adoring nation and touched the lives of many Filipinos, one way or the other.

"The PSA was one in choosing all eight of them as deserving of the Athlete of the Year honors," said PSA President Jimmy Gancio of Malaya.

"It is with deep pride and honor for the association to recognize them in a simple but meaningful (in our modest) way," he added.

Top sports officials of the country led by Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) chairman William "Butch" Ramirez and Philippine Olympic Committee (POC) president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco are expected to join the honorees during the affair that starts at 2 p.m.

Pacquiao, a three-time recipient of the athlete of the Year honor from 2002-04, made a strong case for the award with his stirring knockout win over Morales in two action-packed fights in Las Vegas that generated records in both pay-per-view and live attendance.

Not to be outdone, Reyes did his thing by claiming two out of the four legs to make in the Star Migliad Asian 9-Ball Tour. He also won the biggest prize purse ever in billiards—a total of $100,000—when he topped the IPT World 8-Ball Championship in Las Vegas. Reyes, before winning up with honors, buddy Francisco "Bunggo" Bustamante to take the inaugural World Cup of Pool in South Korea.

Alcano's magical ride in the World Pool Championship in Manila was just as exhilarating, as did Rivera's perfect 300 game in the 8-ball of the World Men's Bowling Championship hosted by Manila in the World FIQ.

Also unforgettable was the hard adventure of Payla, Tipon, Catiglan and Cataldo in far-away Qatar, where each won a gold medal that enriched the country's box finish to the quadrennial of most other 1962.

Apart from the eight Athletes of the Year recipients, major awards will also be given to six other individuals, namely, Junior Tip (pro basketball), Ben Bose (amateur basketball), Jerry Pogoman (golf), Sonny Barrachea (cycling), jockey Jonathan B. Hernandez (horseracing) and Rod Spicer (horseracing).

The rest of the honorees will be made known in the coming days.

Established in 1946, the PSA is the oldest media organization in the country and has a present membership of about 100 sportswriters from the national broadsheets and tabloids.

The list of honorees

ATHLETES OF THE YEAR: Manny Pacquiao, Efren "Bata" Reyes, Biboy Rivera, Ivan Tipon, Marlon Payla, Jessie Catiglan, Peter Cataldo

HONORARY AWARDEES: Junior Tip (pro basketball), Ben Bose (amateur basketball), Jerry Pogoman (golf), Sonny Barrachea (cycling), Jonathan B. Hernandez (horseracing) and Rod Spicer (horseracing)

IBF willing to sanction Pacquiao-Klassen

KLASSEN: Possible foe

By Roberto L. Lagunday
Contributor

A POSSIBLE BOUT BETWEEN International Boxing Federation (IBF) super bantamweight champion Michael Lo Klassen and superstar Manny Pacquiao would be considered if and when the bout takes place in Macao, China, on April 28.

Klassen (19-1-2, 10 KOs) who hails from South Africa, holds the IBF 130 lb title, and is reportedly being slow-footed as a possible opponent for Pacquiao.

IBF Championship Chairman Jerry Pierce, in a message to this writer from his office in New Jersey, informed that the IBF "would love to have that fight," citing that Pacquiao is now unbeatable with the IBF having been in between super bantam-lb/lb holders.

Pacquiao had reigned as the IBF super bantam titlist from 2001 to 2003, winning the title with a sixth-round TKO over overwhelming favorite Lehlo

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Seven new players named to Asean-bound RP Team

HEPPER AD MORGHINELAND PL-BETEH MEfolders Chris Gerstwich and James Youngbuhend are spearheading the 22-man Philippine Team that will see action in the Asean Football Championships, which kicks off Jan. 12 in Bangkok and Singapore.

Seven players, who were not part of the RP Team in the qualifying stage in Baseland City have also been added to the lineup for the eight-nation biennial tournament.

In an effort to fill the slots left by top striker Philip Youngbuhend, who earned six goals in qualifying, national coach Aris Caslib has recalled Alvin Salerno, the top Filipino scorer in the 2006 Asian Challenge Cup, and University of St. La Salle's Aeon Dedaulia.

Other new additions

The other new additions to the team are midfielders Jerome Orcullo and Mariano del Rosario, goalkeepers Archie Bonjato and Alvin Montalan and defender Jan Michael Brandido.

Thus join holdovers Emelio Caligdong, Jose Padual, Antonio del Rosario, Phil Gerstwich, Alvin Deunpo, Japorb Gabion, Ronn Bryant, Aero Gonzalez, Jeff Cesario, Ivo Ocampo and Ric Cao.

"The team is a bit weaker without Phil but local substitutes and the rest of the team are highly motivated to surpass our good performances in Baseland," Philippine Football Federation president Juan Miguel Romualdez told the Inquirer.

Underdogs, but confident

"We know we are the underdogs but we are more confident now."

The Nationals flew to Singapore yesterday to play a series of same opponents with the Singaporean Olympic Under-23 and senior teams starting this Sunday.

Malaysia, a semifinalist in 2004, will be the first assignment for the Filipino hosters on Jan. 12. In the 2004 tournament, the Malaysians thrashed the Filipinos, 4-1.

Three-time winners Thailand will be hotly favored when it meets the Philippines on Jan. 14. The Filipinos wrap up their group assignment two days later when they battle the Myanmarese side, which prevailed 1-0 in its previous meeting with the RP between two years ago.

Co-host Singapore, also the defending champion, is grouped with Indonesia, Vietnam and Laos, the top teams in the Asean Qualifiers. Cobb/EP Tapao, Inquirer Photos

The RP team will be without Phil Youngbuhend (right).

Roach keen on Cebu 'World Cup' showdowns

By Sabres L. Lagunday
Contributor

ROACH: Excited

TOUGHER PRELUDE: Roach, who has refused to handle Oscar De la Hoya in order to retain chic to Manny Pacquiao, yesterday called the upcoming "World Cup" of Boxing in Cebu City a "very exciting" event.

The March 4 event, a joint promotion of Oscar De la Hoya's Golden Boy Promotions and the ALA-BOX group of Antonio Rodriguez and Sonny Cedio, will feature three world title bouts, one non-continental showdown, and three non-title battles pitting Filipino fighters against Mexican counterparts.

Show headliner

Headlining the show is the WBO superbantam showdown between reigning champion Daniel Ponce De Leon of Mexico against undefeated challenger Jhoy "Bomz Bomz" Bautista, tagged by De la Hoya as "the next Manny Pacquiao."

Also in the card is the WBO superfly encounter between reigning champ Fernando Montiel against the talented J "Dy Boom" Garcia.

WBO bantam champ Jhonny Gonzales expressed apprehension about facing Jerry Belmonte in the Philippines, so organizers are looking at WBO light flyweight boss Hugo Cazares defending against either Bert Batawang or Bodel Mojica.

Also John Sanal, the undefeated prospect fighting one of the ALA boys, will also take on Cesma Guerrero for the vacant WBO Inter-continental superfly crown.

'Very interesting'

These either Filipino fighters belonging to Golden Boy Promotions are also slated to see action.

Asked about the major event in Cebu by Philboxing.com, Roach said: "I have two months for you. Very interesting!"

In the same interview, Roach explained why he can't train De la Hoya for his May 5 ding-out with Floyd Mayweather Jr.

"There's no way I can train him," Roach said. "There's just no way for me to train him. Me I have no time at all. It's impossible.

Roach said he would have to give up "almost everybody" if he approached De La Hoya.

"I have I'm gonna be exclusive for him and I just can't do that," he said. "I'm a very loyal person. Manny inspires me a lot, and I love working with him. He brings life to my gym, and inspires everybody. Manny can't make me leave Manny."

Recognized has been slated to fight a will-not-named foe in Mexico April 28.

MAIL and More standouts Elmer Espiritu and Ramjay Ramualo hustle for the rebound during a recent game. Inquirer Photo

Mail & More seeks share of PBL lead

THE LEAGUE NEW ORDER HAS EVERYONE tested double.

With the resumption of the PBL Silver Cup today, Mail and More will seek to confidently show it can give a dose of the bad against wolves-hosts Ivers-DST.

"I can say we're among the contenders now," new Cosmo coach Lawrence Chongson.

The Cosmo have reason to feel cocky when they shoot for their fifth straight win at 2 p.m. at the Ilocos's College Sports Center in Pantabangan.

While statistical front runner Jil Quintalan is unable to fall control, the Cosmo have also been drawing good performances from Oliver Espiritu, Mike Sunico and Joel Cabisares.

Another victory will push the Cosmo to the top with Stanley Chua at 6-2.

Although Happy-PCU tries to assert its title, Harbour Center appears to have overcome an erratic start.

The Port Masters ended 2006 with back-to-back victories to forge a tie with Tobacco and Toyota Otis at 4-3.

Noel Jomillo formed the Port Masters' scorer by averaging 22 points in their last two outings, and coach Jorge Gallent also expects JC Intal, a former teammate, to bring in his explosive game soon.

"It was nice of him to inform teammates to be patient with him," said Gallent of Intal, who has averaged 16.6 points in the games. "He is a complete player. He's a good passer and shooter. I want him to stay a lot."

STANDINGS	W	L
Hardee Stars	6	2
Mailand More	5	2
Happy-PCU	5	2
TalaTech	4	3
Toyota Otis	4	3
Harbour Center	4	3
C. Lhuillier	3	4
Magnolia	2	6
Bottle Kings	0	7

GAMES TODAY (Silver Cup Eliminations)
Ivers vs. Mailand More
Happy-PCU vs. Harbour Centre

Intal was not yet around when Harbour Center bowed to Happy-PCU, 75-68, in their opening-day encounter.

Before the league took a two-week holiday break, Mail and More extended its winning streak to four following a 95-90 double overtime win over Colonial Liquifier Prime Metals.

Quintalan, expected with 21 markers, while Espiritu and rookie Ronjay Ramualo made key plays in the clutch.

The Tigers, meanwhile, are hoping to put an end to their seven-game dry spell through Jojo Duncil, who averaging a second-best 14.3 points in the league.

Jonathan M. Payo

The bible blesses Pacquiao; the greatest turns 65

By Percy D. Delfin

SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA—THE BIBLE knows to always meet us.

It grandfathers before demigods.

The King's double issue for March, now or never issue, honoured Filipino boxing deity Manny Pacquiao on the cover. And that's just his starters.

The publication's April special edition—entire, in-season production—will also have Manny on the cover when it hits the newsstands Feb. 6.

Formerly called King Magazine, the publication has dubbed itself the bible of boxing and rightly so since Hall of Famer Nat Fleischer inaugurated it in 1932.

All through the years, it has unearthed boxing scandals, helped embroidered fighters's pay the and become timeless and covered the sport's largest event of all time.

Never mind the explosion of cheap fans, big magazines and shallow websites. The King remains the gold standard for boxing news.

The cover will serve as the King's year-end awards issue. Its highlights:

Pacquiao's selection as the magazine's fighter of the year. It also marks the fourth time since 2004 that The King has featured the Pacman on its cover.

In the cover boy of the March issue, now on sale, Pacquiao is captured speaking with a left jab, a part of his arsenal that brought down his Mexican nemesis Erik Morales in the third round of their last encounter of a classic trilogy last Nov. 18.

The Filipino slugger's luminous stance speaks volumes about his crowd-pleasing venues.

When it comes to ring action, he is so talented here like many boxing champions today.

Commentary

In fact, two interesting articles in the March issue are on target about that.

"Year in the World" writer William Dwyer talked about Pacquiao on page 38.

"The Much Pretty Boy and not Enough Ordity Boy" author Eric Raskin stroolem on page 80 about reigning welterweight king Floyd Mayweather.

For, Mayweather is in the guy due to close linear de la Hoya, alias golden boy, Pacquiao's finished promoter on May 5 is what is predicted to boxing' biggest pay-per-view encounter.

Its hoin.

. . .

Seems like only yesterday when the Anaheim Gym entered the boxing scene and changed it forever. But some Jan. 17, Muhammad Ali turns 65.

Pirate A.J. Liebling about Ali's entry to the sport: "Just when the sweet science appears to be like a painted ship upon a painted ocean," a new hero . . . comes along like a Mersa tug to pull it out of the canvas."

In the run-up to Ali's birthday, the media have started to celebrate the great heavyweight's mind and awards.

The media are beginning to tap a slew of celebrities, athletes and human rights activists to reminisce the former champion's primacy, presence and reflections. Sportscaster Bonnie Blair is heavily wings like a bee?"

The sports shows on television have dusted off their current documentaries or produced new ones about the guy. One such production, "Ali's Dream" was shown on ESPN last night and would be sponsored on run again before, too. 17.

"Ali's Dream" looks back at the 12 greatest fights fought by the sports giant. It includes the legendary "Thrilla in Manila" with Joe Frazier and "Rumble in the Jungle" and the famous rope-a-dope triumph over George Foreman.

SportsWatch

PCAP derby on tap at Makati Coliseum

THE FIRST INCLUSIONARY RACE FOR THE 2007 SEASON AT THE MAKATI COLISEUM today with the Pinoy Jockey Association of the Philippines (PCAP) 3-year-old derby featuring eleven 80 quality fillies bankrolled by sponsors B-Meg Derby Ham and Grand Slambakes. Aside from good participants, PCAP members will field an entry. A total of 13 stables will be represented by PCAP, all of them 3-year-olds, in the Jan. 6 card: 1:30 p.m. (Grand 20, March 10 and 20, April 10 and 30, May 1 and 21, June 8 and 18 and finals on July 7. The first Makati B-Cup International Derby leans when this is with PCAP members stable.

Fastest-win event gets going at LPC

SOMETHING BIG IS AT THE COMING CHANGING TRADITION with the Cock Stakeout of Las Piñas Coliseum which starts at 12 noon today. Participants may register from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. Inside Round Flight and Lie Between Ins per as a total guaranteed prize of P100,000. A jackpot prize of P75,000 awaits the fastest win champion selected after every 10 fights. The overall fastest win champion will take the second-place stakeholding home P10,000. For inquiries, call 872-1000 or 824-3878.

Religon 5-cocker finals today

THE CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND OF THE "ROOM SUITE" 5-COCK DERBY when contenders at Bulacan Sabong Complex at Pulilan today more than 120 fights sponsored by Lapuan Drug Inc. and Thunderbird Lagerbeer. Also two days of battle, 30 participants qualified with two wins each, including Arnold Gregorio, Gary Santos, Sergio Kalaglah, Pol Dizon, Rolly Dorita, Zaldy Mendoza, Jil Lagunday, Jomo Jaber, Jay-Ar Pastores, Pastor Tanada, Jerry Santos, Pedro Tolentino and Ronny Mendoza. Twenty-five more participants will fight straight five cocks today among them Jesus Aquino, Bobby Cruzado, Nap, Conrad Estrellado, Antonio Avinado, Joel Pogoy, Tarcisio del Lacuna, Boy Tuazon and Ray Bonaya.

FEU spikers on course for title repeat

FAR EASTERN UNIVERSITY (0-20) track to retain the men's crown at the Tamaraw Cup, the men's crown at the UAAP volleyball competition remains on Jan. 14 at the UP gym in Diliman, Quezon City.

Moves gear up against National U at 8 a.m., Adamson dashes with UST at 10 a.m., and University of the East battles tournament host University of the Philippines at 10 a.m.

The Tamaraw had the men's race with a 6-0 win-loss record followed by the Maroons at 5-1.

The Maroons' only loss came at the hands of the defending champions, 26-28, 25-23, 20-23, 23-16, at the start of the conference. 3.

The Tigers are running Ateneo 4-2, their rival has been coming against FEU (20-22, 19-23, 27-23, 22-25) and UP (26-24, 21-25, 25-20, 9-25, 16-14).

Aaron Tomas paces the women's section with six straight wins followed by FEU (5-1) and defending champion Adamson (4-1).

The Lady Tiger fell to the Tamaraw, 21-25, 25-22, 25-21, 25-20, and to the Lady Toons, 23-25, 26-24, 25-13, 25-20.

Ateneo's volleyball remains also on Jan. 14 at the Blue Eagle gym in Ateneo with NU facing DLSU at 2 p.m., UP meeting Adamson at 3 p.m. and Ateneo tackling UE at 4.

IBF willing to sanction Pacquiao-Klassen

Report, B2

California.

However, Tarlac said Klassen has been ordered to fight top-ranked Member Fuzz next, although he brought up the possibility of facing Pacquiao instead.

"There is always a chance that Klassen would ask for an exception," Tarlac explained on how to go about a possible clash between the Pacquiao and Klassen.

Nata is the same fighter who had been manhandled by Mexican Marco Antonio Barrera in two rounds in 2003.

Klassen, according to Inquirer, is one of the names being floated as his next foe, along with such Indo-known fighters as Guadalupe Rosales, Agustin Ramos, Sebastian Ramos, Francisco Lorenzo and Nardo Rabad.

PSC taps private sector for Olympics

By Jane Navarro

FACING AN ACUTE MOOD, THE PHILIPPINE Sports Commission will lay down the groundwork to entice private sponsors for the country's gold-medal quest in the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

PSC chief William "Butch" Ramirez is optimistic Team Philippines could lure the private sector to support the artist-athlete project.

The main man in this project is, again, Pera Gatchalian Jaz Miguel "Mike" Ramirez.

"With the Pera Gatchalian leading the way to raise the funds, businessmen will definitely support it (the project)," said Ramirez.

Ramirez has promised to bankroll the overseas training of at least 30 athletes from different national sports associations who have been identified as potential medal winners for the Beijing Olympics next year.

But the PSC, joining hands with the Philippine Olympic Committee in the quest to win the first ever gold in the Olympics, insisted that the private sector should play a pivotal role to achieve the objective.

Billionaires Lucio Tan, Henry Sy Jr. and Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala are in chalked on the PSC's list of probable supporters. They rank among the world's richest businessmen, according to Forbes magazine of 2006.

"If we in the PSC and the POC have proved that we can work together and present a clear blueprint of where the money will go, I don't think these billionaires will hesitate," said Ramirez.

"I believe that every corporate office has a responsibility to the country."

Tan, who owns Kamboan Holdings, Fortune Tobacco and Asia Brewery, is the Philippines' wealthiest and ranks 42nd among the world's 793 billionaires, according to Forbes.

"It's important for the POC and the PSC to sustain the unity for the Olympics," said Kamboan Holdings President Miguel Cuap, big man Dowling Cojuangco and PLDT top honcho Manny V. Pangilinan, who are both known sports patrons, to the list of possible supporters.

"I'm sure these people will help us.

"It's just a matter of putting the plan together early. We came up late with the proposals before, so we're beginning to do it as early as possible."

With the support of Arroyo, Team Philippines got the needed funding from the private sector during the Philippines' hosting of the 23rd Southeast Asian Games in 2005.

Arroyo shelved away from the Asian Games, and the DP contingent was forced to rely solely on the 350 million budget allocated for its stint in Doha, Qatar.

RAMIREZ

Vijay soars to a share of the lead in Hawaii

KAHULUI, HAWAII—VIJAY PLAYER NAILED off the 16th green Thursday and deposited an autographed golf ball into the cover PGA Tour trophy that will be awarded at the end of the season.

Vijay Singh wants the trophy they hand out Sunday in the Mercedes-Benz Championship.

Convinced that he has figured out his game, Singh moved one step closer to another opportunity to blast ahead of the pack. Singh carried the lapping field with a Hawaiian-record 62 to finish at 8 under 65, leaving him in a five-way tie for the lead in the PGA Tour season-long race, overturn crash.

"There's so much going on about PGA Cup. It's kind of blessing in it," Singh said. "Yeah, I'm looking forward to it. It's going to be a good year. There's still tournaments out there that we have to focus on, and we focus on the PGA Cup itself. Right now, we focus is going to be on winning golf tournaments."

This one might require some patience.

The wind was so strong that Stephen Ames had 152 yards to the hole at No. 13 and ripped a 3-iron. He called it the toughest wind since Saturday at Muirfield in the 2002 British Open, the day Tiger Woods' hope for a Grand Slam ended with an 81.

The wind was so strong that Stephen Ames had 152 yards to the hole at No. 13 and ripped a 3-iron. He called it the toughest wind since Saturday at Muirfield in the 2002 British Open, the day Tiger Woods' hope for a Grand Slam ended with an 81.

Lee was poised to join them until he hit a flight tide that the wind turned into a wild slice, the ball disappearing into the woods on the 11th hole, forcing him to hit another tee-ball with a hopper, then finished with a two-putt birdie on the 18th after hitting 4-iron from 215 yards over water with the wind at his back. He was one shot back at 70.

"I'm glad to get in under par," Lee said. "I don't think if we were on vacation we would have played today."

This is the first of six events to earn points in a season-long competition that will end at the Tour Championship, with $10 million going to winner of the PGA Cup.

Soren Appleby got off to a sluggish start in his bid to be a PGA Tour rookie with his fourth straight victory in the same tournament. He had one birdie, two bogeys and closed with 40 straight pars for an even par 73.

Only a dozen players managed to break par.

In winning at Kapalua the last three years, Appleby has been a combined four shots better than Singh, who then not finished out of the top 10 in his last seven starts at the Mercedes-Benz Championship.

"Golf doesn't care you anything," Singh said drives his driver rolls in the rough. "If you start feeling that way, then you've got a problem. I've had great finishes over here. You can look at it that way. I'm looking forward to the new there does not see what happens."

Singh has slipped to No. 7 in the world after winning only one tournament in the last 25 starts on the PGA Tour. He figured out what was wrong with his swing late last year, spent the offseason fixing it, and is ready to get his game going in the right direction again. AP

Ace jumper sets sights on Olympic medal

HENRY DAGNIS'S American coach believes the 23-year-old can easily qualify for the long jump finals in the Beijing Olympics. PHOTO

by Jane Navarro

AFTER FINISHING OUT OF the medal in the Asiad, NP long jumper Henry Dagnis Jr. said he felt his only state of glory slipping away.

But don't tell that to sports officials who saw a potential winner when Dagnis finished fifth in the recent Asian Games.

These officials felt it could only be the beginning.

In fact, Dagnis is a victim to be some the beneficiary of a jump-six designed to identify the best RP athletes capable of capturing a medal at the Olympics.

"I'm excited to go back to training. There's still so much to be learned, especially now that we're targeting the Olympics," said the 23-year-old Army man from South Cotabato.

Bold view

Dagnis's American coach, Chris Hoffman, has boldly vowed to make the country's long jump ace a qualifier in the finals of the event in the 2008 Beijing Olympiad.

"If you send him back to me, I promise you he'll qualify in the finals of the Olympics," Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco quoted Hoffman as saying.

"With a statement like that, I think we can't go wrong by sending Dagnis back there," Cojuangco explained. "It means to say that there's a potential gold medal winner there."

Fifth place

Dagnis trained under Hoffman, decorated bronze medalist in the 2000 Sydney Olympics, at the University of California-Berkeley in the United States for two months before coming off with an impressive fifth-place finish in the Doha meet.

"I'm not an expert in this matter but my opponent of the performance is what he indeed comprehensive expert, sir," said Cojuangco.

Authoritative jump

"The way he jumped in the Asian Games, he jumped with authority. Based on what I saw, it's obvious he could compete some more," he added.

Dagnis will join 29 other athletes identified by the POC and the Philippine Sports Commission as potential medal winners in the Olympics.

So far bankrolled by Pera Gatchalian Mike Arroyo, these select athletes will be sent abroad to train as early as March and stay abroad until the Beijing sports catchers on Aug. 8, 2008.

The only break for their "super athletes" will be the Southeast Asian Games this year in Thailand and a couple of international tune-ups meant tired up for them in the run-up to the Olympics.

Qualifying leap

So now, Dagnis has set his eyes on breaching the qualifying leap of 8.00 meters for the Olympics.

"I want to meet the standard qualifying record and get a crack in the Olympics," said Dagnis, who will see action in the Asian Indoor championship in Thailand next month and the Chinese Open in May.

Dagnis's best leap during the Asian Games was 7.65 meters.

SEAG record holder

Dagnis has already represented the country in several Southeast Asian Games, including the last one which the country hosted in December 2005, where he also won the gold medal in record-breaking fashion.

Dagnis leapt to 7.61 meters in the 2005 Games, breaking the record for the regional meet.

Television fitness guru helps Toney get leaner

HOLLYWOOD, FLORIDA—JAMES TONEY removed his nylon running suit, walked by the row of cameras and strode confidently to the scale.

"224," fight promoter Don King yelled out.

And that represented the first of what Toney hopes is a pair of victories this weekend.

When Toney lost a split decision to Nagoya Samson Inoue in September, his camp said he was close 186s (nine pounds) heavier, considerably flabbier and hardly in the shape befitting a heavyweight contender.

But after enlisting the help of fitness guru Billy Blanks, Toney believes he's much more ready for Saturday night's rematch against Inoue.

"I'm in 100 percent better shape now," said Toney who actually was listed at 189.5 lbs (203 pounds) for the first fight. "And I will show everyone that on Saturday night."

Toney (51-1, 32 knockouts) has worked up some weight for the rematch, he now 194.5 lbs (207 pounds) when he got the ceremonial nod who over Toney (49-0, with three draws and 43 KOs), and weighed in at Thursday afternoon at 203 lbs (249 pounds).

"Inoue's manner of fact, something with that trainer and his doubt-booty," Nota said. "Conditioned a real trainer."

The winner of this elimination fight gets a mandatory shot at the WBC title against champion Oleg Maskaev, who claimed that belt with a surprising knockout of Hasim Rahman in August and defended it last month with a unanimous decision over Peter Okhello.

"I don't think the Russian will be able to beat either one of these guys," said King, even though Maskaev—who was born in Kazakhstan—is an American who rule to well-received that stunning knockout victory.

After the first fight, Toney's camp put an offer on the table from Blanks, a former martial arts and UFC champion heavyweight who's become a fitness icon selling his "The Ab" exercise videos.

Blanks completely changed Toney's workout and eating habits, putting him on a 1,500-calorie diet and telling someone to prepare him five-and-five-a-day.

"I would challenge any boxer to come do what Jamie Toney has done to prepare for this fight," Blanks said.

Naturally, the Toney camp wasn't impressed with Blanks' assurance and expressed their resistance to Blanks during the pre-fight news conference.

"I watched a lot of Stan on Billy. I watched Billy work on television with those pink gloves on and kicking his legs up in the air and throwing things over here and legs over there," said Stacy Mekkelsy, one of Inoue's trainers. "I admire you work, but this isn't boxercise." AP

HITCH-FREE MATCH: Martina Hingis prepares for a serve from her opponent, Italian Tatiana Garbin, during the Mondial Australian Women's Hardcourts tennis semifinals. Garbin defeated Inoue from the match due to injury leaving Hingis to advance to the final.

NCA World Championship up Jan. 9

A STAR-STUDDED BOXING WILL BE present when the National Collegiate Association (NCA) opens the World Championship Derby at the Pasay City Cockpit on Jan. 9.

"The NCA World Championship Derby showcases the best of the cockfighting industries of the United States and of the Philippines," derby specialist Patrick Antonio said.

American cockers Gary Whitehead, Joe Nelson, Tom Gaspar, Eddie Odell, Jeff Stockpatch, Gene Garza, Rodeo Cox, Dennis Robinson, Andy Robertson, Bud Lawson, Ray Mortimer, Richard Sorrs, Chuck Hubbert, Richard Lanier, Paul Pence, Jason Campbell, Bryan Cochran, Joe Stanford, Gene Grove, Larry Mathews, and Al-Ann Rose Medina and Eric de Guzman are joining the derby.

Wildcat recently won the Tamer Recreation Club Derby in Louisiana, USA, with a score of 7-1.

They will do battle with local cockfighting legends such as Romeo Revilla, Rey Iggy Arroyo, Manolo Lopez, Gus Tolentino, Secretary Rosario Duma, Jun Kastrejon, Edwin Abella, Boy Jun, Chale Rudy Alfonso, Dondog Cojuangco, Feral Villanueva, brothers Eddie and Bobby Aquino, brothers Rolly and Simon Peters, JV Magsaysay, Baby Gaw, Ty Johnson, Romeo Chuckling Mag, Indiro, Lucy Mendoza, Joey Dumada, Jun Manalpac, Sebero Ty, Edwin Jordana, Randy Peralta, Jerry Balan, Tony Mariker, Johnny Lagbas, William Co, James Uy and Dale Dalilla.

People's champion Manny Pacquiao is also a contender for the NCA crown.

MO

SPORTS

Pistons take sting out of ailing Hornets

OKLAHOMA CITY—RICHARD HAMILTON SCORED 27 points and the Detroit Pistons hardly missed Chauncey Billups, rolling to a 92-68 victory over the New Orleans Hornets on Thursday night.

The Pistons snapped a three-game losing streak as the Hornets were unable to finish one of a 26-point halftime hole without starters Chris Paul (sprained right ankle), Peja Stojakovic (back surgery) and David West (right elbow surgery).

Jackson Rugg led the Hornets with 16 points. Desmond Mason added 15 and reserve Devin Brown scored 14. Tyson Chandler grabbed 16 rebounds for New Orleans, which lost for the 13th time in its last 12 games.

The Hornets, who rank last in the NBA in scoring, had their lowest output of the season.

Mavericks 100, Pacers 91

At Dallas, Devin Harris scored 15 of his 24 points in the fourth quarter, pushing Dallas past Indiana and extending the NBA's longest winning streak to 12 games.

It is the second 12-game winning streak this season for the Mavericks (20-7), who have the NBA's best record. The first dream victories in a row came after the defending Western Conference champions started the season 0-4 for the first time in team history.

Josh Howard, who has won back-to-back NBA player of the week awards, had 25 points and 11 rebounds to lead the Mavericks. Dirk Nowitzki, still bothered by sinus problems that forced him to miss a game Saturday, still had 20 points in 36 minutes.

Al Harrington had 24 points and 11 rebounds for Indiana, which played its first game in 2007 after being off since a home loss to Charlotte on Saturday night. Jermaine O'Neal had 20 points and a season-high 16 rebounds, while Jeff Foster had 14 points and 12 rebounds.

Lakers 112, Kings 108, OT

At Sacramento, California, Kobe Bryant overcame a cold start opening 36 minutes to finish with 42 points, and Lou Amundson blew a 25-point lead before rallying past Sacramento.

Bryant led Smush Parker for the game-tying dunk in the final second of regulation for one of his nine assists. Shortly second on the opening possession of overtime to give the Lakers the lead for good in the first meeting of the season between these two Southern California rivals.

Brian Cook added 26 points, Luke Walton scored 16 and Andrew Bynum had 15 points and 11 rebounds as the Lakers won their first game since center Kwame Brown went down with an ankle injury.

Sacramento was also without its starting center, as Brad Miller missed the game with flu-like symptoms. Mike Bibby led the Kings with 28 points, Kevin Martin had 21 and Ron Artest added 19. AP

NBA GAME TODAY ON SAL SPORTS 19

9:30 a.m. ... (Ind vs Houston, Indiana 99 p.m. 8:30 p.m.)

DALLAS Mavericks guard Jason Terry (right) tries to get a shot over Indiana Pacers forward Jermaine O'Neal.

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Bogut blooming with 'bullseye' gone

WASHINGTON—AUSTRALIAN BIG CENTER Andrew Bogut, the number one overall pick in the 2005 NBA Draft, is making even more of an impact this season after helping the Milwaukee Bucks to the playoffs in his rookie season.

"In the last 25 years, there have been only four number one picks to make the playoffs in their rookie year: David Robinson, Chris Webber, Tim Duncan and Andrew Bogut. That's pretty good company," said coach Terry Porter.

Bogut's scoring, rebounding and assists are all up this year by an his minutes played, shooting percentage, and free throw accuracy.

"Last year I was worried about getting the ball, worried about all that type of stuff," Bogut told Reuters in a locker room interview. "This year I'm just going out there and playing.

"The difference between this year and last year been night and day since I've learned how to be a professional."

Bogut, 22, is averaging 11.7 points, 9.2 rebounds and 3.2 assists a game this season. While these are solid numbers, many believe the number one collegiate pick should exhibit all-star credentials right out of the gate.

Porter believes the burden associated with being the top draft choice is exaggerated.

"The expectations of a number one pick, especially where they've become younger and younger, it's a little bit unfair," he said. "He's never had a very solid rookie season and he helped us make the playoffs.

"He's gotten better this year. He has more responsibility and statistically he's improved. His interior play is one of the reasons why we had a really good December. He's a very competitive player."

Bogut claims he no longer feels he has a bull's eye on his back following his selection ahead of Utah as the top pick in the draft.

"Not one, it's gone," said Bogut, who left Utah after his sophomore season after earning consensus Player of the Year honours. "I had a ball of a year in college and got a lot of awards. I think I deserved to be the pick.

"People are always going to pick at you, no matter how good you are, no matter how bad you are. I've done better than several other top picks in the last five or six years. So I'm not too worried about that anymore."

Bogut, sixth in the league in shooting percentage at .568, does the little things that help a team win. He is an excellent passer and runs the floor well for a big man. It is not unusual for him to lead the Bucks in assists.

But Bogut, who learned for Australia at the 2000 Olympics in Athens, is not concerned about his statistics.

The Bucks (16-14) were ousted in the first round of the playoffs last year by Detroit, an experience that only whetted his appetite.

"Just getting to the playoffs last year and getting a taste of it was unbelievable," he said. "Turning to the second round is my new goal. That's what I really want." Reuters

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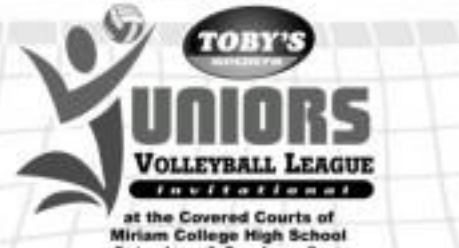

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NY Yankees ready to send Johnson back to Arizona

NEW YORK—RANDY JOHNSON IS EXPECTED back to the Arizona Diamondbacks after two unfulfilling years with the New York Yankees that began with a nasty offseason condemnation and ended with a sweep playoff loss.

The Yankees reached a tentative agreement with he's to send Johnson to Arizona for reliever Luis Vizcaino and three minor league players, a move that allows Johnson's agents to get him a contract extension.

Arizona general manager Josh Byrnes confirmed what he called "an agreement in principle" but did not identify the players that would go to the Yankees.

New York would receive Vizcaino and minor league right-hander Ross Ohlendorf and Steven Jackson, and shortstop Alberto Gonzalez, a Major League Baseball-affiliated said, speaking on condition of anonymity. The Yankees also would pay $2 million of Johnson's $16 million salary this year.

Teams are granted a 72-hour window by the commissioner's office to close transfer deals, and the Yankees and Diamondbacks must finalize the trade by 5 p.m. New York time Sunday.

Johnson, a five-time Cy Young Award winner, seven months to fit in during two seasons with the Yankees, meeting with when he put his long right arm up to block a television camera and said "Get out of my face, that's all I said" as he walked past the unknown Manhattan hood in his physical.

He was hurled during spring training but often turned in brown velvet gloves that ensured begins.

He turns 44 19 during the regular season with New York, pitching much of the time with back pain that caused him to have surgery in October. But unbelieving fans focused on his 0-1 record with a 6.92 ERA in three postseason appearances for a franchise that expects to win every World Series.

Last year, he lasted just 5 2/3 innings and gave up five runs in Game 3 of New York's first-round series against Detroit. The Yankees lost 8-0. All behind 2-1 in the best-of-five series and were eliminated the following day, sparking days of speculation that manager Joe Torre would be fired. AP

JOHNSON: Back with Diamondbacks

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BUSINESS
Editor Raul G. Manuela • Assistant Editor Cecrie S. Marfema

Forex reserves hit all-time high of $23B

Big boost from OFW inflows, investments in local stocks

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINES' FOREIGN EXCHANGE RESERVES SURGED TO an all-time high of $23 billion in end-2006 even as the public sector took advantage of robust dollar inflows from overseas Filipino workers and offshore investors to retire foreign debts ahead of maturity during the year.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. announced yesterday that the gross international reserves (GIR), a key indicator of the country's ability to service the foreign exchange requirements of the economy, rose by $4.5 billion or 24 percent from $18.4 billion in end-2005.

The GIR consists of the BSP's gross foreign currency holdings, gold reserves, foreign investments and special drawing rights from the International Monetary Fund.

FOREX B2

December inflation lowest in 3 years at 4.3%

By Michelle V. Rosal

CONSUMER PRICES ROSE BY 4.3 PERCENT in December last year, the slowest in almost three years, as the peso rose against the strengthen and prices of oil in the world market eased.

In December 2005, the inflation rate stood at 5.7 percent. The last time inflation rate hit a low of 4.3 percent was in April 2004.

The inflation rate in December was within the forecast made by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas at 4.2-4.6 percent and was down from the 4.7 percent recorded in November.

Including volatile prices of selected food and energy items, core inflation in December settled at 4.6 percent, a slowdown from the 4.7 percent the previous month.

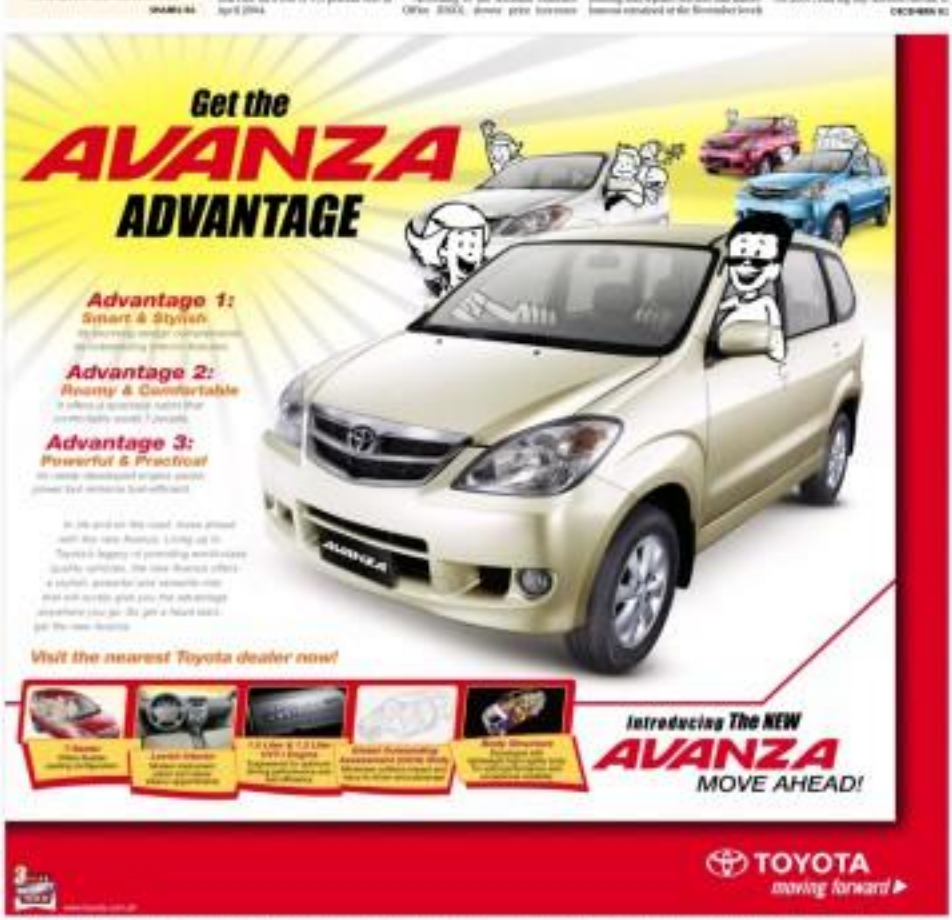
According to the National Statistics Office (NSO), power price increases were avoided for commodities under the food, beverage and tobacco at 4.7 percent from 4.9 percent the previous month. Fuel, light and water also recorded a double-digit price increase at 6.4 percent from 7.7 percent.

On the other hand, clothing posted a faster increase in prices to 3 percent from 2.8 percent in November. Inflation for housing and repair, services and miscellaneous remained at the November levels of 3.7, 4.4 and 2.5 percent, respectively.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. told reporters that the movement of prices in December to closest that the inflation rate for 2007 would stay within the government's target of between 4 and 5 percent.

"The lower rate for December bodes well for a within-target inflation rate for 2007, but big any adverse shocks," he

CONSUMER B2



'06 deficit seen to settle at ₱81B

Gov't expects to post 4th straight year of deficit

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT's budget deficit for 2006 likely settled at ₱81 billion—better than the projected ₱125 billion that was set under the fiscal program for last year.

The deficit however takes into account the estimated ₱97.6 billion in revenue collections, and the ₱178.5 billion in expenditures.

According to the Department of Finance's latest estimates, the projected deficit is at the lower end of the forecast range of ₱80 billion and ₱90 billion.

At ₱81 billion deficit will be equivalent to only 1.34 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP). The ceiling set under the government's fiscal program for 2006 was 2.1 percent.

Should the forecast be accurate, then the government would be posting a budget deficit in its fourth straight year of decline.

After the Asian financial crisis of 1997, the government emerged posting surpluses and began to issue deficit in its budget.

In 1998, the deficit hit ₱40.9 billion. It peaked at ₱238.7 billion in 2002.

With the threat of a fiscal crisis looming over its head, the government began to implement reforms, including tax hikes, to reduce its deficit.

The deficit was set to ₱190.9 billion in 2005, to ₱187.1 billion in 2004, and to ₱146.5 billion in 2003.

The expected lower than programmed deficit for 2006 came about despite the Bureau of Internal Revenue's tax collections shortfall.

Last year's fiscal performance was partly due to improved collections of duties by the Bureau of Customs, and revenues generated through the privatization of government assets, as well as tighter spending.

Congress in 2006 failed to pass the proposed ₱1.0-trillion national budget for the year. The government was then forced to operate on the 2005 budget, which was about ₱100 billion lower than the proposed budget.

The Bureau of Customs, which collects duties from imported goods, yesterday reported that it had exceeded its ₱79.9-billion collect for 2006. The BOC said projected figure should that to 2006 collections had to ₱101.195 billion.

On the other hand, the BIR collected less than its ₱675.4-billion net target set by the national government. The BIR reported that in 2006, it collected ₱664.8 billion in taxes.

RP workers to benefit from BPO windfall

By Rica T. Obimbanda

Asia Netcom, a data communication provider that operates an undersea cable system in Asia, has identified the Philippines as a key country from which it can tap technical experts and engineers.

According to Asia Netcom, it is anticipating a "significant growth" from supplying the needs of the Philippine business process outsourcing (BPO) industry.

The industry is expected to generate $12 billion in revenues and one million jobs by 2010.

Tu Bud Cando, Asia Netcom senior vice president and head of human resources, said that the company is set to grow its employee base by nearly 20 percent. It also intends to operate aggressively across the Asia-Pacific region, particularly in the Philippines, compared that expansion.

Considered than only to keep pace with growth, Asia Netcom will need more engineers and product developers.

About 10 to 15 engineers will be hired this year and many more will be recruited over the following years to keep the company in the Philippines. More posts are also expected to open to existing Filipino personnel are promoted to management or senior posts.

"Our business has experienced robust growth in the last four quarters," Asia Netcom country manager Agnes Gervacio said in a statement. "In anticipation of new customers, we are recruiting people into mission-critical technical support positions both here in the Philippines and across the region. The Philippines has an abundance of technical and engineering excellence, and we are eager to hire the best talents."

According to the Commission on Higher Education, there are 30,000 registered electronics and communications engineers in the country.

Tiu group paid ₱503.8M for BPI's Far East unit

THE TIU GROUP OF PROPERTY developers has paid ₱503.8 million for its purchase of Far East Savings Bank from the Ayala Group's Bank of the Philippine Islands.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday, BPI vice president Cecil de Tavera said the bank had sold and signed the agreement to sell 50 million shares in Far East Savings with the Tiu-led JTBC Equities Inc., Rosewell Equities Inc. and Star Equities Inc.

Tendersen said the transaction was fully settled in cash, following receipt of approvals from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

The buyout marked a return for the Tiu group to the banking sector. Last year, the group sold its interests in International Exchange Bank.

The former Far East Savings Bank will be renamed "Building Bank of Asia Inc."

Far East Savings is a thrift bank with one banal office branch. But the new owners are requesting from BSP's permission for four (4) thrift branches from BPI Family Bank.

In 2007, more flexible monetary policy seen

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS expects monetary management to be more flexible this year due to the slowdown of inflation to 4.5 percent, which averaged 6.4 percent from 7.7 percent the previous year.

The BSP last November kept its overnight policy rates, but unusually stated monetary policy when it put in place a sliding system—a scheme where it puts a lower rate for overnight money placed in reserve of certain levels to encourage banks to lend out instead of pick all their funds with the monetary authority.

This year, analysts expect the BSP to cut its overnight rates—currently at 7.5 percent for the overnight borrowing, and 5.75 percent for the overnight lending—by at least 50 basis points and eventually cut the lending rate.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. yesterday said the November 7.5 percent rate is "consistent with the prevailing inflation of 4.3 percent—the lowest in two years—drift within the medium-term forecast range of 4.2-4.9 percent for the month.

"The lower rate for November helps well for a million target in the two years for 2007, turning any reverse direction," Tetangco said.

The BSP sees inflation may come back to the targeted path of 4.5 percent this year.

Tetangco said the strengthening of the peso also contributed to the moderation in headline inflation.

He explained that the steady decline in inflation in 2006 was due to the easing oil prices, a stronger peso and generally stable food prices.

"Latest forecasts also indicate that average inflation in 2006 is likely to be in line with the 4 percent plus or minus 1 percentage point target," Tetangco said.

Alliance Global raises capital to ₱13B

By Elizabeth L. Sandoy

ALLIANCE GLOBAL GROUP INC. (AGGI), the holding firm for some prominent brands in the food and fast food chain, has been shareholders approved to increase its capital to ₱13 billion, from ₱5 billion, for the company to expand from food manufacturing business this year.

According to director Tan, AGGI draft, the increased capital will largely be used to acquire food food manufacturing business.

The annual budget for the acquisition, but not yet know the dollar. But Tan said AGGI would use a combination of debt and equity to finance clients.

"We are looking at acquisitions of growing our business this year," Tan said yesterday. "The increase in the authorized capital stock will enable us to pursue an aggressive expansion program. Discussions have been started with various parties and the necessary disclosures will follow when everything has been finalized."

Tan also said that AGGI has substantially increased its capital expenditure this year to ₱3 billion from ₱1 to ₱1.5 billion last year, largely for acquisitions and for the expansion of its existing businesses in place nationwide.

On the capital increase, AGGI was also approved a 195-billion-stock rights offering which consists of 2.2 billion common shares at ₱1.30 a share. The 10-to-1 stock rights offer may be issued by the first quarter of next year, sources said.

AGGI said the rights shares would be issued from the 7.95-billion proposed shares increase to its authorized capital.

Last year, AGGI acquired 49 percent in the Philippine franchise of McDonald's, making it the 100 percent Philippine-owned. All of acquired the units for ₱10.05 million.

December inflation ...

From page B1

rate affords the BSP greater latitude in the conduct of monetary policy," Tetangco said.

The peso closed at 49.50 against the dollar last December, to a stronger than the 52.00 the previous year. An appreciation of the peso helps slow down inflation because it makes the cost of imported goods cheaper.

The BSP attributed the strengthening of the peso on increased dollar inflows mainly from remittances of over-seas Filipino workers.

Similarly, easing prices of oil in the world market brought inflation down about 90 percent of the country's oil requirements are imported.

The Department of Energy said latest results, the benchmark, used in setting domestic oil prices, averaged at $58.005 a barrel last month, down substantially from the record high of close to $79 in August.

The downdrawn in inflation took on a pause on the BSP to tighten its monetary policy, Tetangco said.

The BSP uses monetary tools as a tool to control inflation. An increase in its key policy rates encourages banks to pick more funds in the BSP, hence in reducing off excessive liquidity in the system and tempering inflation.

Shares close lower

From page B1

points at 2,096.16, off a loss of 2,079.39. It was the lowest intraday high of 3,613.75. The broad, all-shares index fell 5.39 points to 1,886.93.

Volume was moderate, at 1.7 billion shares traded valued at ₱4 billion.

"The market has been on a strong rebuilt gives to show that for now the environment will hold for the momentum," said Jose Mario Alfonso Capital Securities.

"The strong mark up that broke the 3,000 level of resistance that needs to still can explain to some extent, it not are a solid rally" he added. AFP

Forex reserves hit all-time high of $23B

From page B1

The country's strong foreign reserve build-up last year was supported by proceeds from the government's foreign borrowings, remittances from overseas Filipinos, foreign direct investments and, to some month, the strong inflow of portfolio investments.

Foreign reserves of all in the world market brought inflations down about 90 percent of the country's oil requirements are imported.

The foreign reserves build-up would cover about 4.4 months' worth of imports of goods and payments of services and four times the country's short-term debt based on original maturity and 2.3 times based on residual maturity.

Residual maturity refers to outstanding external debt with original maturity of one year or less plus principal payments on medium- and long-term loans of the public and private sectors falling due within the next 12 months.

Central government's deficit of the proceeds of its tuition program.

"The current level of reserves was accumulated even after the $229-million prepayment of the BSP's remaining credit to the IMF as well as the national government's $72-million prepayment on various Asian Development Bank loans," Tetangco said.

"Without these prepayments, the GIR would have been higher by about $301 million," he said.

The BSP alone has prepaid a total of $1.17 billion in foreign debts since the start of 2006.

During the last quarter of the year alone, OFW remittances were seasonally strong while in Asia to the local stock market were robust, the BSP was also spurred by currency traders speculatively buying dollars in anticipation the peso's appreciation.

The peso ended 2006 on a high note alongside favorable economic prospects that boosted investor confidence as well as strong OFW remittances. The local currency gained about 7.6 percent since the start of the year to close at 49.50 to a dollar from 53.39 at end-2005.

The Philippines' decision to purchase outright a peso-denominated investment arrangement with the IMF with the prepayment of remaining debts with the Fund also contributed to the optimal market sentiment.

Asia stocks slip; yen gains on hopes of a rate rise

Market awaits decision of US Federal Reserve on key rates

SINGAPORE—ASIAN STOCKS fell on Friday as investors indexed to profile from recent gainers took to Friday's Market and investors kept US rates against the backdrop of the world's largest economy.

An ABC News report that North Korea was preparing a new nuclear test hurled selling at Tokyo indicated short sentiment but US and South Korean officials said that they saw no evidence to suggest Pyongyang was on the brink of such a test.

The yen rose across the board on expectations the Bank of Japan would raise interest rates this month, while gold and oil closed back ground after stiff overnight losses.

Tokyo's FTSE 100 stock index was expected to open 25-37 points lower, brokerages predicted.

"If the US jobs numbers are even a little bit higher or lower the market's going to take that as a big factor", in parallel the actual Fed current rate, said Hideaki Kiyoshi, head of forex sales and trading at Sumitomo Corporate in Tokyo.

The nonfarm payroll figures (see graphic) are anticipated to show 20 thousand more jobs created in December. Kiyoshi said that whether the US Federal Reserve will cut rates in coming months to help shore up the slowing economy.

But most analysts expect the US central bank to hold rates steady in early 2007 while it monitors a cooling housing market for any signs that it is impacting the broader economy.

Japan's Nikkei ended 0.13 percent lower with more, wood and energy stocks under heavy selling pressure, after it hit an eight-month closing high on Thursday.

Second quarter, such as Honda and steel stocks, succumbed to profit taking and a stronger yen, which will erode profits for exporters. Honda fell 3 percent.

South Korean shares suffered their third consecutive daily fall and some opening week of a new year since 2000 in fears of a North Korean nuclear test added to concerns about slowing export growth and heavy consumption at home.

The KOSPI ended down 0.8 percent but shore since week lows.

Bigger losers were concentrated at the week's drop in oil prices lifted transport stocks such as Korean Air Co., which gained 2 percent.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng index was little changed despite losses in Chinese oil plays while Australia shares fell 0.2 percent as a mine week low as lower copper prices weighed on miners BHP Billiton Ltd. and Rio Tinto Ltd.

The euro fell more than 1 cent from the day's high on Friday, as the European currency appeared on expectations the Bank of Japan may raise interest rates soon.

Japanese government bond futures edged up from seven-month lows, taking their cue from stronger US Treasury prices, but dealers said buyers were wary of chasing the market too high because of the prospects for a Bank of Japan rate rise.

Oil edged up toward $58 a barrel after plunging nearly 8 percent over the past two days as traders bet warmer-than-expected US fuel inventories and unusually mild temperatures in the world's top energy user.

Gold, bounced after another choppy drop in New York, amid buying from jewellers and industrial users, but players were cautious about chasing the yellow metal ahead of the US payroll report.

Spot gold matched Thursday's 1-week low of $625.50 an ounce before regaining strength and hitting an intra-day high of $625.90 an ounce. Reuters

Bernanke earns praise

WASHINGTON—AFTER ALMOST A YEAR on the job, Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke has kept interest rates steady and convinced Fed officials he plans bold and skillful use of monetary tools to ward off a downturn economy.

Under Bernanke, the policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee raised interest rates three times and then stopped in the sidelines, ending a two-year rate hike campaign.

Bernanke's Fed has held rates steady since June while signaling ongoing concern about inflation, even as calls grew louder that rate cuts might soon be needed prevent moderately sluggish economy from slipping further.

"I think he's called it right so far," said Alan Blinder, a former vice chair at the Fed.

Analysts say Bernanke, who has just four weeks to go until his one year anniversary as Fed chief on Feb. 1, may have stared probably the end of the rate hike campaign, which he'll breathtaken interest rates at 5.25 percent.

"They stopped the lightening cycle at about the right moment, despite the fact that inflation was going up at that moment," Blinder added. "The decision was made not to go any higher, and that turned out to be the right thing."

While his policy instincts seemed sharp, Bernanke has been less adept in his role as a public figure.

He conceded to CNBC television reporter Maria Bartiromo in a social venue in April asked Bernanke (another) when she expected he believed markets overestimated his calling. was to hold interest rates steady (the Fed raised rates six in one meeting).

A few days earlier, Bernanke had told Congress he doesn't see need to move power power in rate-cutting campaign, even if inflation rates were elevated.

Analysts said the testimony was a factor in underpinning rise in financial market inflation expectations.

Bernanke "told us it is worrisome in time that anyone would think of him as dovish, that that feeling did permeate last week," Bartiromo said in her report. Reuters

Businessmen wearing sacred Shinto vestments pray before the altar at Kyoto Hyogo Shrine in Tokyo. Thousands of Japanese businessmen left working to chance on Thursday as they packed into shrines to start the new year with prayers for a robust economy. AFP

AirAsia new long-haul budget carrier

KUALA LUMPUR—THE FOUNDER OF leading Southeast Asian budget carrier AirAsia on Friday announced the launch of a new long-haul low-cost airline, AirAsia X, which will fly to China, India and Europe.

The new airline will be operated by Malaysian carrier Fly Asian Express (FAE), which is closely linked to AirAsia with common shareholders, and currently operates most of AirAsia's services to Bangkok and Hong Kong.

"AirAsia X will offer an innovative product offering ... (and) passengers a level of comfort and convenience usual for long-haul travel," said AirAsia CEO Tony Fernandes who is also the major shareholder in FAE.

Fernandes said AirAsia X will begin operating in July from the low-cost terminal at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA), with daily services to Istanbul in China, India and Europe.

He said AirAsia X was still finalizing its fleet requirements but was considering getting Boeing 777-300s and Airbus 330-200s.

The company said in a statement that AirAsia X will also tie up with other low-cost airlines in order to increase connectivity and route network.

It did not name the partners but The Asian Wall Street reported this week that AirAsia is planning to team up with Richard Branson's Virgin Group and Tony Fernandes launch "the world's first low-cost global airlines."

AirAsia was launched as a budget carrier in December 2001 with just two aircraft.

It now offers more than 100 domestic and international flights to Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Cambodia, Vietnam and the Philippines. AFP

Thai tourism hit by bombings

BANGKOK—UP TO 15 PERCENT of the large million visitors are expected to visit Thailand in the first three months of the year was caused their trips after deadly bombings in Bangkok, a leading think-tank said Friday.

The blasts—which killed three people and injured dozens, including nine foreign tourists—are expected to cost the sector 20 billion baht ($555 million) in revenue, according to the Center for Economic and Business Forecasting.

The center had earlier forecast that 13.43 million people would visit Thailand this year, generating tourism income of 420 billion baht ($11.6 billion).

"The number of tourists, both Thais and foreigners, will drop from our previous projections. The impact on tourism, from the bombs will be felt not only in Bangkok, but also across the country," said the center's director Thanavath Phaseelakit.

Army-installed Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont warned Friday that Thais should brace for at least months of political unrest, saying the government might not be able to prevent more bombings.

Tourism is a key money spinner for Thailand, generating about 6 percent of gross domestic product (GDP).

Apart from tourism, Thanavath said consumption and investment would also suffer, the combined impact would shrink GDP by 0.9 billion baht.

The damage would result in a half-point decline in the first quarter GDP from original projection of 4.9 percent, he added.

The center, however, maintained its GDP forecast for 2007 at a range of 4.5-5.0 percent, compared to 4.5-5.5 percent anticipated by the Bank of Thailand.

"If there are no new attacks, confidence among consumers and businesses will improve in the second quarter," said Thanavath.

"In the worst-case scenario, the economic growth for 2007 could drop by 1.5 percent," he added. AFP

GM's top executive vows to keep global leadership over Toyota

CEO Wagoner says he likes being No. 1

DETROIT—TOYOTA MOTOR CORP. HAS eyes on taking the title of world's largest manufacturer from General Motors Corp. next year, it will not happen without a fight.

In an interview Thursday, GM Chief Executive Rick Wagoner said his company has room for growth worldwide and will eventually do that in time.

"I like being No. 1, and I think our people take pride in it," he told a small group of reporters at GM's headquarters. "It's not something we're going to sit back and let some body else take it from us."

Toyota has recently announced a global production target of 9.42 million vehicles for 2008, becoming the only GM. But it still trailes GM. That would easily exceed the 9.2 million vehicles GM is estimated to have produced in 2006.

Wagoner would not reveal the company's 2007 production targets, but he said GM has the capacity to build more than 9.42 million cars worldwide.

The company will fight for every sale, he said, but will vow within its strategy to rely on quality products to make money and less on selling unwanted trucks with heavy incentives.

If Toyota does pass GM, Wagoner said he would not be pleased.

"It wasn't be a happy day for me, but I've lost basketball games before in my life. You get ready and you learn and you go back the next day, and that's what we'll do," he said.

"We're going to fight to keep the position, and if one day we lose it, we'll fight to get it back."

An 8.0% market share chunk when high fuel prices chase people away from trucks and sport utility vehicles, GM cut production last year.

But it is selling new midsize new products and Wagoner said the North American market should be healthier this year.

Toyota, with a better balance of cars and trucks, capitalized on the consumer shift and eased its market share by two percentage points last year.

For the first time, the company passed DaimlerChrysler to become the No. 3 seller in the United States.

Toyota is now concerned about becoming No. 1 globally, said spokesman Irv Miller. The company is working to keep its quality high, focus on customers and roll out 16 new Toyotas in the coming year.

"A perceived value challenge for global leadership is not something we're even thinking about," Miller said.

Also in the interview, Wagoner said he agreed with Ford CEO Alan Mulally's statements that the United Auto Workers may have to make significant concessions in upcoming contract talks to keep GM competitive.

While he would not be specific about what GM would seek in bargaining with the union, Wagoner said the company faces a cost disadvantage in comparison that needs to be addressed.

But he would not say if GM would seek labor cost parity with Toyota and Honda Motor Co., both of which have significant US manufacturing operations.

The GM will begin negotiating new labor contracts with Ford, GM and DaimlerChrysler in the fall.

Like Ford, GM already is talking with the UAW in advance of formal contract talks later this year, Wagoner said.

He said the UAW already has helped the company with health care concessions and has cited that will continue to closely work there.

But GM is "not fully competitive" in all parts of its business, he said.

"We need to continue to make progress in the 07 negotiations," he said. "If we can make that happen, and if we can do it on an accelerated basis, I think that would be terrific for us ... But improving competitiveness is fundamental. I don't disagree with what Alan said on that at all." AP

U.S. VEHICLE SALES

Toyota Motor Group gained market share in 2006, passing DaimlerChrysler AG to become the No. 3 auto seller in the U.S.

Industry analysts predict that Ford may lose its No. 2 spot to Toyota in 2007

ALL LIGHT VEHICLE SALES
Ranked by number of cars and light trucks sold in 2006

GM	4,608,992
Ford	2,714,609
Toyota	2,540,924
Chrysler	2,143,000
Honda	1,609,208
Nissan	1,018,248
Hyundai	455,500
BMW	319,984
Kia	294,392
Mazda	268,736
Mercedes	255,000
Volkswagen	233,140

AUTO GROUP MARKET SHARE

GM* Ford* Toyota Chrysler* Honda
24.3% 18.4% 13.4% 10.6% 8.1%

Others 25.8%

TOYOTA AUTO GROUP SALES

	Passenger cars	Light trucks
Toyota	1,372,115	944,871
Group total: 2,042,223		
Lexus	192,327	130,391

Toyota Camry is the most-selling car in the U.S. for the 10th consecutive year

U.S. subsidiaries REUTERS

NOTICE

Please take notice that the Securities and Exchange Commission has approved the change in the corporate name of **SEAWORLD MARINE SERVICES, INC.** to **GLOBAL GATEWAY CREWING SERVICES, INC.** on December 11, 2006.

CAPT. ROMMEL T. BACUTAN
President and CEO

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Budget and Management
Provincial Government
OFFICE OF THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

SCIENCE/HEALTH

Lito Cruz S. Mangaoang

When leg cramps mean something else

By Charles E. Rohde

YOU HAVE FINISHED A FEW miles when you felt some cramping in the back part of your lower leg. You stop for a few minutes and the pain goes away. You continue on, and the pain comes back a little while later.

Cramping or discomfort in the muscles in the back part of getting older or for folding up the same exercises, why not head to your doctor's office?

"Your particular cramp-like pain could be claudication, most often a symptom of peripheral vascular disease, a potentially serious but treatable circulation problem," answered cardiologist Eldon Eastman Preston of St. Luke's Medical Center.

PVD refers to a cluster of conditions in which the blood vessels especially those that supply the various tissues and organs become narrowed or clogged.

Atherosclerosis

The most common cause of PVD is atherosclerosis, a gradual process in which fatty material collects along the inside walls of the arteries.

"In time these fatty materials thicken, harden and may eventually block the flow of blood. In this case depriving the thousands of fine muscle-carrying organs and tissues of blood, which would mean the death of these tissues and organs," Preston explained.

Moreover, the doctor warned that PVD is likely to be disregarded because most individuals with the condition do not experience symptoms, and even if they did [illegible] from claudication, a person may also develop a sore on the leg or foot that does not heal, foul-smelling or cold to the touch or experience hair loss on lower legs. Sex would likely diminish libido and need would seek medical help.

Growing challenge

Some features that PVD represents a growing medical challenge worldwide for doctors who fight to prevent stroke, loss of limbs or other debilitating conditions to their patients.

He said claudication also, though it happens occasionally, is a clear warning to prevent because people who have it are also at increased risk for heart attack and stroke.

The doctor also added that even with not the serious and sometimes fatal consequences of heart attack and stroke, a cramping PVD would cause enormous cramping pain every while at rest and that the sores may lead to gangrene, which may require amputation later," warned Preston.

ST. LUKE'S Dr. Preston: People should be aware of the potential dangers of untreated PVD.

Invasive test

The doctor suggested taking an ankle-brachial pressure index, a simple, noninvasive test for screening and diagnosing presence of PVD.

The invasive yet accurate test involves the ratio of the blood pressure at the ankle and arm to see whether a person is at risk.

"A normal resting ABI means that the blood pressure in the ankle is the same or greater than the pressure at the arm, and therefore, no significant narrowing or blockage of blood flow," Preston explained.

An abnormal ABI, however, would mean further tests, which would include taking computed tomography scan, magnetic resonance imaging scan, or an ultrasound scan of the arteries to map out the patient's arteries, and show where they are narrowed.

AN UNINFLATED balloon catheter with stent is inserted in the clogged blood vessel (left). Once the balloon is inflated, the stent also expands and holds in place where it keeps gut when the balloon catheter is withdrawn (right).

Medical history

"But even by a detailed history-taking or questionnaire alone, a doctor could readily tell if a patient is positive for PVD," Preston said.

He said smoking is the most powerful risk factor for developing PVD. "It is believed that the process of atherosclerosis and artery narrowing is almost guaranteed to begin in anyone who has smoked regularly for more than five months."

Preston cautioned that it is never too late to make a change by giving up smoking as well as getting more exercise, eating healthier and watching one's diet.

But if lifestyle modification alone is not sufficient regularly or surgery may be necessary.

Advancements

"Many advancements have been and are being developed in the treatment of PVD. People should be aware that here in the Philippines, we now have so many competent doctors who could skillfully and safely perform these advanced procedures," Dr. Preston said.

Angioplasty, Preston explained, is a nonsurgical procedure that would be used to widen narrowed or blocked arteries.

"A thin tube called a catheter with a deflated balloon on its tip is passed into the narrowed artery causes. Afterwards, the balloon is deflated and the catheter is withdrawn. In some cases, a cylindrical, wire mesh tube called stent is placed in the narrowed artery together with the catheter. When the balloon is inflated, the stent expands and holds open the artery in its open, keeping the affected artery open," he explained.

Preston said the procedure that takes not more than six hours to perform is relatively inclusive considering that the catheter is inserted through a small incision—about the size of a match head—in the limbs or groin.

"People should be aware of the potential dangers of untreated PVD. One doesn't have to spend months to be treated and even the very elderly patients should be medicated to ease their disturbed nutrient and treatment if they experience pain or changes in their limbs or they would seem improvement in the quality of their life," he stressed.

Another virgin birth

DISCOVER

Hannie Sanrice Rufino

JUST BEFORE CHRISTMAS, THE MEDIA reportedly reported that Flora, the Komodo dragon at the Chester Zoo in England, was due to become a mother. At this time, Jayne Rylatt, Chester Zoo's curator of Lower Vertebrates and Invertebrates, announced MEDIC that if the eggs had hatched around Dec. 28, none of the lizards would be named Jesus. As it is, the lizards in question, hatched had 23 eggs back in May 2006 and 8 of them could hatch if or any time this month.

"But remember all like hope, though, is that Flora is a virgin; she's never in the zoo since she was a pup (sic) and hasn't been exposed to any male Komodo dragons since 1999. As Komodo dragons are supposed to reproduce when a male mammates a female, the question of the eggs' parentage is unknown and undetermined by people in the zoologists.

The need to breed

As reported in the Dec. 28 issue of the Sun and Metro, a team of researchers led by Philip Watts at the University of Liverpool practically proved some of Flora's eggs that had collapsed early on and found that the lizard was indeed the sole genetic parent. The paper was published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of the Chester Zoo. In fact, the Komodo dragon, initiated from its kind and feeding the need to breed, had parthenogenetically reproduced.

Parthenogenesis is the process by which offspring are produced without any male involvement. Only five vertebrate species can do this, and such reproduce in the pages. Some of at some that the happy mother lizard might have also reproduced parthenogenetically recently.

Interestingly, Flora is not the first female dragon who's chosen this expensive, time course. In 2003, Sungai, a female Komodo dragon at the London Zoo, had a litter of eight egg and became a mother the following January. This was several years after her last contact with a male dragon in captivity. Sungai's DNA, which was found to be identical to her parents, ruled out the male dragon as the father of the offspring and the eggs, which also appeared in the Natural paper, proved to be better dietary reasons.

Sungai later met and mated with Sinta, one of Flora's brothers. She had 6 eggs, one of which hatched. Again, the baby lizard's parentage was checked locally, despite appearances, the Natural paper not only about parentage, and it was established that Rajo was the father. Watts et al. note in the paper that Sungai's ability to reproduce sexually, or by doing so naturally "confirmed that parthenogenesis is a rare event, but it is not the author's note that there are less than 4,000 Komodo dragons in the wild, and a number of these are nearing extinction, it doesn't seem too far-fetched to suggest that the species are experimenting with ways to avoid extinction.

If the Komodo dragons and other animals are in the verge of extinction, perhaps due to infertility or other factors, do eventually turn to parthenogenesis—either as the primary way to reproduce or simply as an alternative—Watts et al. wonder. This ability would reduce the species' chance of dying on contact of disease. One of the reasons sexual reproduction—and males—have evolved for so long as this have to that the unique combination of genes that is given to offspring is not the same as the parents' genetic diversity.

As the very best, Flora and Sungai's parthenogenetically produced offspring also have Komodo dragons. Interestingly, it remains to be seen if the Chester Zoo will introduce Flora to a male Komodo dragon after her offspring are handed to see if she will continue to lay, (or is the last Sungai's bottom). There is no word at this time on whether or not the Kelly Marx Author of the Natural paper, could use the Chester zoologists, on-stage gift of handsome and superb.

. . .

E-mail the author at [illegible]

Christmas Puzzle winners

EUREKA!

Quintin A. Lee Chua

FORTY-FOUR READERS SENT solutions before the deadline of the 2006 Christmas Puzzle contest. They were rounded points based on correctness, logical reasoning, and neatness of all, clarity of explanation. Already Tito Infante Malpaldo co-coed was the only contestant to receive a perfect score of 8 points, and he will receive as an upgraded copy of my revised book "Lo Lee with Science: Outstanding Young Filipino Scientists Tell Their Stories" (Manila, 2006), signed with Philippine executive director Jocondo Sabellano.

Runners-up with a total of 4.5 points were Willy Catamoco [willycatamoco@yahoo.com], Jennifer Bayer [jennifer.bayer@yahoo.com], Janet A. Amparo [janamparo@yahoo.com], Katherine Marie G. Tuason [kat_tuason@yahoo.com], Ryan Gilson Llorning [llorningryan@yahoo.com], Jeremiah Santiago [santiagoj@hotmail.com], Mining Legaspi [mining_legaspi@yahoo.com]. Each will receive a copy of another book I edited, titled "Magic, Volume Two: Diversity of Learning, Serving, and Serving" (Ateneo Office of Research and Publications, 2006). Winners can claim their prizes at the Ateneo Cultural Heritage Department, 3rd floor, Science Education Complex, Loyola Heights, Quezon City.

Readers who got 4 points were [illegible] Dymalibot [dymalibot_jane@yahoo.com], Ernest S. Gr. De Guzman [gguzman@gmail.com], Ian Gelbo Lim [gelbo@yahoo.com], and engineer Joseph Gonzales M. Cortez [cock_blue@yahoo.com], Gerard Dumlao [gerdumlao@gmail.com] get 3.5 points. Glenrose Medina [rosie_rose11@yahoo.com], John Reynold Ong [John_Reynold_Ong@yahoo.com], Jeff Bernardo [jeffbernardo@gmail.com], Jonathan Ong [jonathan_ong@yahoo.com], Jonathan Ong [jonathan_ong@yahoo.com], Jonathan Ong [jonathan_ong@yahoo

BUSINESS

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PLDT, Globe launch plans for OFWs

Low-cost packages for small businesses

By Rosa T. Olchondra

THE COUNTRY'S TWO BIGGEST telecommunications companies have embarked on an aggressive drive that offers overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) low-cost business packages.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) has repositioned its myOSL Internet Café Plan as a business opportunity for OFWs looking for ways to start a business here.

The myOSL Internet Café Plan is an all in one package for as low as P10,000 down payment and a monthly fee of P4,000. The package includes five PCs, Internet connectivity and merchandising support.

PLDT's small business group head, Butch Jimenez, said the owner was targeting about 1,000 Internet café stations or more by the first quarter of 2007 from this offering alone.

Globe Telecom and wireless unit Innove Communications have also created a low-cost broadband package for families of Filipino migrant workers.

Called "Globe Negosyo," the project targets OFWs seeking to start or are engaged in small business such as internet room, bakeshop and kiosk retailer. They can take advantage of Globe Broadband with five PC and dedicated landline service for as low as P5,995 a month for a 384 kbps connection or a one 1Mbps connection plan a desktop and landline for P2,495 a month.

"We're giving our OFWs with existing businesses here an opportunity to augment their income by adding Globe Negosyo package to their business. With a very minimal investment, they will get a chance to earn more from prepaid use, Internet use, and IDD and MDD calls," said Globe Marketing SME business group head Allane Asuncion.

Asuncion added that OFWs who have yet to start their own business could easily tap Globe Negosyo with hardly any risk due to the very small capital involved.

She added that aside from OFWs and their families, Globe Negosyo is also available to other operators of micro businesses in the country.

PROPERTY

Edw. Cesar G. Mangoranong

Double-digit growth for residential sector

By Tess R. Salazar

THE YEAR 2006 HAS shaped up as a significant year for the Philippine property sector, realizing analysts' predictions that it would double the five percent growth the industry registered in 2004, basically due to the increasing demand for both housing and condominium sectors.

Eric Santos, the Philippines' country president and CEO, said that the "optimism" on having double-digit growth to tend mainly toward the residential segment in selected growth areas.

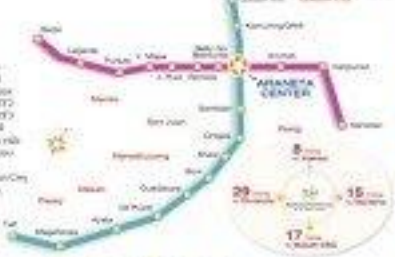
"By way of consumer demand, double-digit growth is currently being experienced at the Global City where a building frenzy is taking place," Santos says.

"Almost every street zoned as residential district has a condominium under construction, about to be completed or being branded up signaling some form of groundbreaking. The hotbed of activity has extended to Mckinley Hill where a slew of residential and custom-built BPO-friendly projects entrenched. Development are under consideration," he adds.

DOUBLE-DIGIT B3-1

Manhattan Garden City
AT THE ARANETA CENTER

Connecting You to the Metro's Most Important Destinations.
And to a Cutting-edge Lifestyle.



The Manhattan Garden City is the country's first mixed-zoned development, letting you to see just one but two main options: the LRT2 along Aurora Boulevard, And MRT3 along EDSA. So you's just a stroll away from a stylish and walkable ride to virtually all major points of Metro Manila.

What's more, Manhattan Garden City connects you to the shops, offices, restaurants and entertainment centers at the Araneta Center. So you can live, shop, play and more like never before.

Easy ride around the metro.

A 720-meter-long footbridge standing four stories above the streets tells connects all 20 residential towers of your customers. And leads you straight to the LRT2 and MRT3. There are both grocery and benches. So going to the main stations is as enjoyable as a walk in the park.

With the trains, close by, the power to go places is yours. Your children can be in class in UP in Quezon City in just 8 minutes via the LRT2. Or Manila's university belt in 19 minutes.

Your wife can get to Greenhills's largest stores in 20 minutes. With you can be in your office in Ortigas in 6 minutes. Ayala Avenue in 17 minutes, or Taft Avenue in 22 minutes through the MRT3. And since both lines link up with the LRT1, you can reach many more places in the metro than you'd believe.

This means you spend less time on the road. And more for time with family and friends.

Easy link to the Araneta Center.

Manhattan Garden City enjoys direct access to the plaza playground that is the Araneta Center's. Your entry point is a **colonnaded wonder station** with a hard-sight lobby, grand staircase and four passenger elevators. The station connects you to the direct level to the Gateway Mall and to Cubao Boulevard. From there, you're just steps away from Ikonia's, Ole, Shoppers, 40 Mall, Farmers Plaza and the iconic Araneta Coliseum.

Manhattan Parkway Residences

Manhattan Garden City's first phase, Manhattan Parkway. Take your pick of cozy executive studios and relaxing one-bedroom units located in two towers. With sweeping views of the Araneta Center and Manila Bay. At the heart-warm garden deck, enjoy the brilliant walkways, jogging trails, fitness stations, indoor swimming pool and gym. And you're just a footbridge away from more play amenities — and more fun — at the upcoming phases.

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Unique offerings reap success for a Fort Bonifacio high rise

By Charles E. Bolan

CENTURY PROPERTIES' SOUTH OF Market (SoMa) may just be another 42-story mid-tower residential condominium landing above the Fort Bonifacio Global City skyline.

However, SoMa is an ordinary development in this posh development located on 11th Avenue between 25th and 26th streets is the country's first residential condo where units come fully lived and completely furnished, offering 30 percent more in terms of unit value and costing 30 percent lower than comparable developments in the area.

The development is the most affordable within the Fort area where units are priced starting at around P3 million (and some at even attractive payment terms).

"How did we do it? Using a process concept in the United States and Europe, Century Properties has a unique competitive edge that makes investors partners instead of merely buyers. This approach translates to tremendous savings while residents get to enjoy the most luxurious amenities and lifestyle," explained Century Properties COO and SoMa managing director John Gerard Antonio.

He added that as a unique co-development project, SoMa is VAT documentary stamps and transfer taxes free, which translates to huge savings for investors.

SOMA developer's commitment to build four floors per week per month ahead the development to be completed ahead of schedule.

ARTHUR'S rendition of a fully completed SoMa main towers

Sold out in record time

With such unique offerings, the whole development sold out in record time, but able to finish construction way ahead of schedule, which is good news for SoMa's future resident as they will be able to move in much sooner.

In fact, last November, SoMa held its topping-off ceremony as the North Tower was fully completed one year ahead of its original completion date as well as the South Tower, which was completed one month ahead of its original completion date.

"Century Properties and partner, Meridian Development Group, have remained true to their commitment of building four floors per tower per month. This allowed SoMa to be completed ahead of schedule, delighting our partners," Antonio reported.

Pull factors

Indeed, with SoMa, Century Properties continues to pull factors in property development with its laid-paced and efficient one structure (models and rooms).

"Because everything is done in-house, we are able to benefit from a lot of operational and purchasing efficiencies from our dedicated construction partner Now Construction and Development Inc. Also, we make it a point to always overdeliver and exceed our client's expectations," Antonio assured.

Another excellent factor that makes SoMa attractive is the fact that the development is located in a fully master-planned community strategically located and easily accessible to the Makati central business district, the Ortigas CBD and the new Ninoy Aquino International Airport terminal 3.

Fully fitted, fully furnished

"Unlike other developments, SoMa residents will be moving in until luxurious amenities and units that come fully fitted and fully furnished with bedroom, living room and dining room furniture and kitchen appliances, including the same creative interior design team behind the award-winning Greenbelt Park Parkes.

Century Properties' Fountain Park Parkes is an ultra-luxury twin tower project that is now hailed as the most prestigious residential condominium in the Philippines, as judged by Architect's magazine.

"SoMa's Fine Layouts in one, two, or three bedroom units of 38 sq m to 115 sq m sizes—are definitely designed for flexibility so our partners can expand their unit sizes if the need arises. All units are corner units and have balconies that, giving each a breathtaking and unobstructed view of the surrounding," Antonio assured.

SOMA's units come fully fitted and fully furnished with furniture and appliances.

ONLY top appliance brands comprise every completed unit at SoMa.

To give an idea, Antonio explained that SoMa units facing south will get to enjoy the view of the Poro's bustling center while those facing west would get the spectacular glimpses of the Manila Golf Club. The east-facing units on the other hand, get the view of the Ortigas CBD as well as airplanes while those in the north would get the Makati City skyline.

But within SoMa's 20,000 sq m compact, Century Properties will make sure that its residents will have plenty of places to go to like department stores, specialty shops, restaurants, theaters, amusement, entertainment centers as well as flowers and fresh fruits market.

Double-digit growth for residential sector

From page B1

Ed Wrigglesworth, vice president of Midland Marketing, echoes what most industry experts say that 2006 was the third year of a seven-year positive cycle. He adds that because the strength was fueled mostly by Filipinos residing abroad, high-rise residential condominiums as well as office developments buoyed by sustained BPO strength were "very strong."

Says Grant Asia president Jerry Navarette, "Philippine real estate has enjoyed its best time for the last two years, with the industry growing by doubling its figures in 2006, recovering from a slight stall in 2005."

Growth areas

Navarro says significant growth was recorded in the residential segment, especially vertical residential buildings in growth areas like Fort Bonifacio, Eastwood City and Alabang.

He said the growth in horizontal developments has been considered, primarily driven by end-demand and OFW markets.

Navarrete says: "The residential segment of real estate has gained remarkable growth driven by the increase in demands, both locally and from OFWs, for the housing sector and mainly for the vertical sector."

Brigada credits a stronger demand from overseas Filipinos through local developers' roadshows abroad. He says that his group successfully promoted Parkway Tower and The Metropolitan projects. Midtown had three roadshows in 2006, most of them in the US West Coast, where a big percentage of the Filipinos are.

Also, as the real estate market weathered in the United States, US-based Filipinos looked to other places to invest. Aside from China, first generation Filipinos are now entering their retirement and have amassed considerable buying power and they are now beginning to think about returning to Manila," he says.

Housing

Navarrete says the housing industry has enjoyed substantial growth given the demands of more Filipinos looking for either their first home or an investment for the family.

"North demand (low rental) from across socio-economic sectors (A to D) and even both horizontal (house and lot and lot only) and vertical developments (condominiums)."

He adds: "Buyers have benefited from the increase in number of developers that fight tooth and nail to make their products the best offer in the market."

Interesting offers

Navarrete says that with the improving price-dollar rate, lower inflation and interest rates—most likely driven by the government's "aggressive economic thrust"—and favorable economic fundamentals, developers and their financial partners have come up with very interesting offerings, resulting in very attractive packages and payment schemes with "very low interest rates."

On the other hand, the industry has continued to suffer from high costs of development and construction with prices doubling in figures versus the years ago," he adds.

Navarrete says Brigada developments continues to be out of reach by the majority but has remained steady with only a handful of innovative players offering world-class developments in the north and southern growth corridors. This can qualify as a niche market and is expected to target the affluent A to B segments of all real estate buyers.

GBA Philippines says the retail segment, on the other hand, registered the growth based on year-to-year retail sales. Navarrete says that for retail developers to show a good report card to its shareholders, they must continue to expand these developments in provincial markets.

"There really is no other choice but to consider retail developments outside Metro Manila. At present, malls are being planted even in second-tier provincial areas," Navarrete observes.

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Manhattan Garden City, which is strategically located at the Ayala Center and boasts of direct connection to the LRT and MRT, is one of the pilot projects of Megaworld for Homelite. Homebuyers can take advantage of the lowest interest rate ever - 5.50% annually for ultra-spacious flat but no down payment. "This is ideal for investors who have a strong cash flow and who want to save years of paying interest," noted Megaworld Central Properties Inc. President Anthony Chuntangco Yu.

An ideal alternative to to attack the home loan in 10, 15 or even 20 years to pay, with affordable monthly payments. The rates are also very attractive, from 6.50% to 11.00% annually and can be fixed for 25 years. "At the longest term of 25 years, our 20.8 square meter studio unit comes out at a very affordable P16,847 monthly. This is the best chance for many individuals to own a home, at prices they can afford," he added. The same flexibility of low interest and low monthly amortizations are also being offered for 1 br and 2br units for families.

Interested? For better check out your future home soon, to visit the Manhattan Garden City showroom at the 3rd level of Greenway Mall. Or call 810-3333 or email inquiry@manhattangardencity.com for a viewing appointment.

Healthy stairs

STAIRS CAN BE DANGEROUS. Many people are hospitalized and even killed due to stair-related injuries in homes and workplaces. These accidents in many cases, have been caused by badly designed stairs.

Stairs are the vertical parts of stairs. They are measured from the top of one step to the bottom of the next. Treads are the horizontal parts or the width of the step. They are measured from the nosing or front corner to the base of the riser. Typical defects are stairs that are too high or too low or irregular dimensions of both risers and treads.

Another typical defect of stairs is the inadequacy of handrails. The means handrails are difficult to grasp, especially for children and the elderly. Railings are also spaced too far apart making it possible for children to slide through and fall.

Stair would be treads that are slippery, especially at the nosing or front corner. Other defects include floor patterns that resolve blur the distinction between nosing and treads, and lacking stairs where lighting is inadequate. This is particularly dangerous for the elderly and the visually impaired. Stair finishes that wash or peel off like carpetabet) tiles or wood planks can cause people to slip and fall.

Interior staircases, found in many cramped spaces like townhouses and condominiums, are designed to occupy as little space as possible. This results in very steep staircases that go straight up to the upper floor without any landing and with no natural light and air. People who use this kind of stairs are always in a hurry to go up or down to get past this "blank zone." Such staircases are accident-prone.

Some staircases are deliberately kept out of sight or hemmed in the most unimportant part of the structure, thereby giving up the chance to create a visually inviting feature of a home or office.

GREEN ARCHITRENDS

Armando de Jesus

Staircases are very challenging to design and cost for a major focal point in structures. They should be designed not only to comply with the building code but should also be comfortable to use and beautiful to look at. In most important name, however, is safety.

Stair design, green architecture

Green buildings are primarily healthy buildings. This means that every building component that goes into the construction of a house or a building must consider the very important requirements. Staircases must be able to transfer people from one level to another comfortably and safely.

Basic green features

The starting point for any stair design is the width of the treads which should be at least 30 inches to allow people to place their feet on it safely. The riser should not be too high so it will be easy to climb. The maximum should be nine inches high with seven inches as ideal height. The most comfortable height for risers is about 6 and 6-1/2 inches.

As a guide, the height of two steps plus the depth of one step should equal about 26 to 28 inches. To illustrate, assume riser height to be 7 inches and the tread width to be 28 inches. Following the guide, 7 + 7 = 14, then add 14 inches (for the tread width) for a total of 28 inches.

Regarding stair width, regularly used stairs should be at least 30 inches wide and considering that furniture needs to be carried up, it should preferably be 48 inches wide.

Care must also be taken to avoid steps with different heights. This usually happens when the first and last steps are either higher or lower than the others. This will almost surely cause many people to trip.

Handrails are an essential part of the staircase. They should be smooth and sphere-free with enough clearance to avoid tight spots where the hand could get caught.

Balcony spacing is best kept between four or six inches so that children cannot stick their heads through and possibly fall down.

Disadvantages

There are many disadvantages when interior staircases are placed in the inner core of a house or structure. First, without lighting, it is not safe. Second, it is not energy-efficient. Third, the staircase tends to be underused and badly maintained because people do not notice the gradual building of grime and dirt.

Single steps are the most dangerous since single step has no handrails, people are not much aware that the step exists. Consequently they miss the step and fall.

For structural stairs, many people still prefer to use hardwood species that are rather difficult to find or very costly to purchase. This is not an environmentally sound practice since there are other real-stairs of hardwood available that can be alternatively used. If wood is to be used at all, thin slabs can be sliced into thinner planks terminated with a solid nosing and installed on a stable framework or concrete to get the desired effect of thick solid planks. This practice can considerably reduce the cost of wood used.

Staircases need not be a complicated feature of the house as long as the basic elements are in place like safety, comfort, looks and function.

For comments or inquiries, e-mail armadodejesus@gmail.com

HEALTHY stairs are an important component of green buildings. They are designed so convey people from one level to another in a safe, comfortable and efficient manner.

The finest 1-bedroom unit at Manhattan Garden City

THE RECEIVING area features tatami and modern Chinese ornaments. It sets up easily doubles the space.

THE DINING area's garden-themed meal set is so inviting, you'd want to partake of a hearty meal right away.

THE BALCONY is perfect for private conversation.

LIFE IS ALL ABOUT CHOICES. IF YOU'RE one of the few who make that choice to get only the finest, most luxurious things in life, then you'll find your perfect home at Manhattan Garden City.

That home could be a stylish 1-bedroom unit within this new city, its superior interior makes it one of the finest one-bedroom units available today, as can be viewed at the Manhattan Garden City showroom within Eastwood Mall.

Trendy theme

The model unit was outlined in a trendy Modern Asian theme. Upon entry, the co-living area makes you feel at home right away. It features tatami and modern Chinese ornaments, and a mirror easily doubles the space.

Once you step in further, you will appreciate how the open layout makes the living and dining areas look even larger. The white sofa with dark red and an

THE ONE-BEDROOM model unit was designed according to a modern Chinese mood.

large pillow looks so comfortable. Lamps and Chinese masks make good accent pieces on both sides of the sofa.

Then, your eyes gave to the living corner's main gem: the Japanese wall, with its art tiles and a trio of terra cotta soldiers guarding their main domain: that of a modern Chinese cabinetry. Surely this space is the perfect spot to feature your precious art collection once you move in.

Over to the left, the dining area's garden-themed meal set is so inviting, you'd want to partake of a hearty meal right away. Flowers and leaf bowls catch your fancy. You imagine how dining here will always be a delight and the meal consumed in this place will so change here with your loved ones.

And when you want to catch some air or have a private conversation, the balcony is just a step away. In here, a cane lounger and a pot station are the perfect accompaniments to morning the day right.

TERRA-cotta soldiers stand guard in wonderful ancient pieces.

Main showcase

Then, you check out the main showcase: the master's bedroom. Its red motif will surely bring back. The bed's frame was meticulously designed, as well as the pillows that call to mind a stunning Chinese maiden, which sums up the unit's design: it's a true Asian beauty. A yellow umbrella further hints of the artistry of Ong Artist Center/Tarzon.

At 53.5 square meters, this one-bedroom unit definitely offers a lot of space. Plus, with Manhattan, the revolutionary offering from leading developer Megaworld Corp. and Security Bank, yuppies and starting families can acquire this stylish one bedroom unit for only 697,757 monthly.

Transit-oriented dwell

After all, what more can you have desire? The best features that make Manhattan in New York City an enviable residential haven inspired this new city on the rise. Its modern residential towers take their design cue from Manhattan's world famous, breathtaking skyline. Over there, you can take a walk, board the subway or take a cab to get to your destination fast. Over here, Manhattan Garden City is a true transit-oriented development. It is the first and only project in the country so far that offers automatic Carbon wash fumed systems: the LRT 2 and MRT3.

Better make that choice now by checking out the finest one-bedroom unit. Just visit the Manhattan Garden City showroom at the third level of Eastwood Mall, or call 8 to 5333 or e-mail *inquiry@themanhattangardencity.com* for a viewing appointment.

Paolo R. Reyes
Janine Cuenco-Dorio

A Night in Neverland

AS CHILDREN GO ABOUT THE BIWEEKLY business of growing up, they often forget a magical month from their lucrative July (sic). Happy thoughts can make pouty.

As we celebrate the arrival of a brand new year, it might be a good idea to reclaim the lost moment of our childhood. This month, the Hong Kong-based Alibi Productions flies in the critically lauded "Peter Pan," J.M. Barrie's beloved tale of lost boys, Indian maidens, and pirate capers.

The international theater production—which boasts a talented cast from the UK, Australia, and the US—will be staged at the CCP from Jan. 11 to Feb. 4.

Proceeds from the production will be used to fund the flagship projects of Children's Hour, a great-giving organization connected to the welfare of marginalized Filipino children. In the words of Peter Mansell, it's going to be "an awfully big adventure." Call 891-2999, 752-1300, or visit thyhour.com.

Three Kings cometh

On Sunday, Jan. 7, the Casino Español de Manila (855 T.M. Kalaw St., Ermita, Manila) celebrates the Feast of the Three Kings. From 5 p.m. onwards, children of all ages are invited to welcome Gaspar, Balthasar and Melchor as they arrive on horseback bearing candies, and other treats. The club has lined up a fun-filled program of activities for kids while their parents can feast on authentic Spanish tapas or shop in a mini-bazaar. Call 527-7604.

Other Super! 24/7 events:

Jan. 6, Saturday

[illegible]

Jan. 7, Sunday

A Night of Brass Music: UST Brass Quintet at the Shangri-La Plaza Grandstand; Jazz Sunday Brunch at Tower Lounge of PICC; Champagne Buffet Lunch at Tower Club

Jan. 8, Monday

Happy Mondays Inaugurating Energy Bleachers at Energy Centerpoint; Crash Line Workshop at Ed Rivera Studios Makati; Chemical Indulgence at Cabaret at Manila

Jan. 9, Tuesday

[illegible]

Jan. 10, Wednesday

[illegible]

Jan. 11, Thursday

[illegible]

Jan. 12, Friday

[illegible]

Schedules may change without prior notice. For more info, text 24/7 Gigs to 2300 (Globe/Innet 2300 (Smart). Log on to mag24-7.com or grab up your free copy of 24/7 ELECTRONIC MAGAZINE at bars and restaurants around the city. Submit your schedules before Tuesday to events@mag24-7.com & mag24/7_ph@yahoo.com

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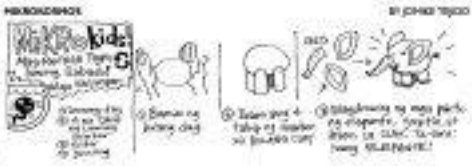
ATOMIC AND WEBBY — By Dan Garcelland

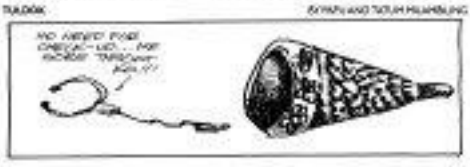
DIVINE COMEDY — By Steven Padilang

KIND MACHINE — By Manny Arroya

HUMBUGGINGS — By Jomar Tejico

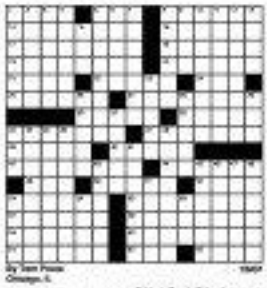


TULOOK — By Pen and Totum Hilumbuling



BEN — By Daniel Shelton

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Sam Pooler
Chicago, IL

HOROSCOPE

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku — by Dave Green

	1			6		5	2	
		5						
			3		4			
2		9				4		
		4		3		7		
		8				3		9
			9		6			
						6		
	5	2		7			3	

Difficulty Level ★★★★

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

7	4	3	5	1	6	9	8	2
5	6	8	3	9	2	7	4	1
9	1	2	8	7	4	3	6	5
6	8	9	1	3	5	2	7	4
1	2	4	7	6	9	8	5	3
3	7	5	4	2	8	6	1	9
8	9	1	2	4	7	5	3	6
4	5	6	9	8	3	1	2	7
2	3	7	6	5	1	4	9	8

Difficulty Level ★★★★

Superheroes
of the Photoshop generation

By David Millan

Super! has always been a champion of local artists. We believe in giving them space, the venue and the chance to showcase their creativity and let everyone also look at their exciting world of colors.

And so when we heard about Graphika Manila, we were thrilled.

It's good to know that this generation of artists is growing in a every speed. Thanks to technology, talent and a lot of imagination, the Photoshop generation is forming a course of its own.

The possibilities of the magic that is Photoshop are endless. A creative mind, an eye for detail, and of the touch of the functions be all, you need to be the new big thing in graphic design.

A lot of us are giddy amateurs but there are countless graphic designers and artists who have been doing it for years now—and have been perfecting their craft ever since.

Using different kinds of programs for graphic design, they've created a new breed of artwork that compel Photoshop enthusiasts.

Graphic design has taken over. It's everywhere—from the world wide web to the billboards in Edsa and the shirt that person beside you is wearing.

With this in mind, to introduce some more skills to, organized Graphika Manila—the very first international multi-media design conference in the country. It gathered professionals, students and members of the media in a venue fitted for the talented crop hard and more national design artists in operation.

Headlining the group of speakers was Joshua Davis, winner of the 2001 Prix Ars Electronica Golden Nica (the Oscars of Interactive Digital Art and Design). He conducted two mind-blowing, life-changed workshops on the first day of the conference. Davis is one of the most prolific and influential artists in the world of digital art and design. He is the creator of the popular Flash site, Praystation, and has created many of the most famous Flash sites on the Internet, including HBO, 24 and recently, the Matrix.

Davis's work has been featured in Wired, Time, Rolling Stone, Newsweek, Time Magazine, Entertainment Weekly, Rolling Stone, Wired, Time

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SATURDAY Special

Editor Nestor U. Torre • Assistant Editor Rico R. Rulo

STRIKER. "Fun party" at the museum.

Sequels, crowd-pleasers boost new film year

By Nestor U. Torre

DESPITE SOME exceptional films, 2006 wasn't one of the current decade's more productive years. So, film buffs are hoping that 2007 will turn out to be a more significant cinematic year.

Do they have reasons for being optimistic? In the commercial, mainstream sense, yes. This early, Hollywood analysts are counting their prospective billions as they hearteningly survey the delicious box-office prospects of a number of much-anticipated sequels that bid fair to top the charts.

Blockbusters

The most eagerly anticipated sequel is "Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End," for the simple reason that the hit film franchise's first two installments were such huge blockbusters.

"Spider-Man 3" is also poised to cash in on a lot of fans, particularly

RADCLIFFE. Reprises role of teenage wizard in "Order of the Phoenix."

Politicians and artists don't mix

By Butch Cervantes

THE METRO MANILA FILM Festival is once again the center of a major tempest. So, what else is new? For years now, the film fest has become a magnet for controversies.

This happens when politicians think they know better than the film artists themselves.

Cooperation

What's worse is when politicians (who think they're also artists) get the cooperation of politically-inclined industry personalities. This is a terrible combination.

Remember politician-actors who have won better days back some people who can help them survive a political hiatus.

I have long complained about the quality of MMFF entries. Entries are not produced with the real intent of a film fest in mind. Producers have a whole year to prepare their entries, but they rush home to shelve their movies just in the nick of time to beat the deadline.

Entries

In the 70s, the Manila Film Festival demonstrated what it was to have a real film fest. In 1976 alone, the festival had some superior entries like "Minsa'y Isang Gamu-gamo" and "Tatlong."

However, since then the entry were up against commercial entries that started independent box-office dramas like Dolphy, Fernando Poe Jr. and Joseph Estrada. They did poorly at the box office.

Of course, producers quickly decided to go even more commercial. One producer even declared, "Ito lang ang tinatanong ko, ano ang ibig sabi-hin?"

Profit

Since most producers focus on profit, very few dare produce festival-quality films. And because horror and fantasy movies have a following, a transition to these genres has already come up with covers on-spicule.

Dito ko "Maria Pa," Lily Monteverde's production about Chinay life. Her name of more,

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SIGNIFIGANT HOUSEGUE. Pop musicians radically different agendas in "The Blood Diamond."

Sequels, crowd-plea

because its weakest aspect here is taking a much darker turn this time around.

The latest Harry Potter sequel, "Order of the Phoenix," similarly "darker" because its heroine, juvenile leads, particularly Daniel Radcliffe, now come across as young adults.

Finally, "Shrek 3" is another potential winner, especially because its voice cast includes Cameron Diaz and her real-life opposite, Justin Timberlake.

Has-been singer

Film buffs are also keeping an eagle eye out for "Music & Lyrics," a romantic dramedy in which Hugh Grant plays a has-been singer from the '80s whose comeback hinges on his lyric-writing skills of a newcomer played by Drew Barrymore.

The film looks...and sounds...like a winner in our book, because it runs to look daringly against type, and gives them an opportunity to show viewers that they're capable of more than their standard turn-on-comfort roles.

Stars of TV's "The Sopranos" are thrilled because, after 10 years on the tube, the popular mob-themed show is letting the big screen. The film

sers boost new film year

PHAUXIE: A darker twist for the superhero.

[illegible] and Tony, and the full-length production should be very worthwhile to watch.

As for the film version of the hit musical, "Footloose," fans are holding a benefit for it because a Brewster John Travolta ... [illegible]

Much more interesting to actors have [illegible] creatively innovative productions.

On Jan. 8, "The Social Network," co-starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Cynthia Lennon, [illegible] with radically different agendas who are both bent on getting their hands on a [illegible] "Jennifer" Connelly [illegible]

Movers and

"A Night at the Museum," starring Ben Stiller, is set to do [illegible] well here. Stiller plays a new character [illegible] [illegible] "Ghetto Ho," a film [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

Lessons from the past year

FOR A MOTHER, "MAKE YOUR HOME A safest place for your children." Mothers do the dreaming for their kids.

From a doctor: "At home, enable what is positive, and children will imbibe it; protect the negative, and they will also imbibe it."

No one can tell you the meaning of your life; it's something you alone can answer.

Emotional difficulties

Life is difficult. Intro-tics a tendency to solve personal problems rather than deal with them head-on. This creates and the emotional difficulties inherent to them can lead to mental illness.

STREET SMART

Mandy Aurasoro

Life gets easier when you have a friend you can confide in. It's liberating to have a confidant who understands, and with whom you neither measure nor do not weigh your thoughts. With a friend, or brothers, he/she can bless all your troubles away.

Learn to say no.

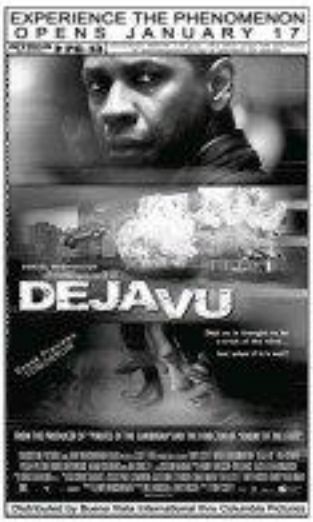
Honesty

Without honesty, there's no trust; without trust, there's no understanding; without understanding, there's no love, and without love there's nothing.

Best of all, last year, I learned to walk with God.

* * *

Registration for the Mandy Aurasoro Relative Photo Safari closes April 5 to 10 and on Jan. 13. Call 899 1707, or e-mail mandy.aurasoro@yahoo.com.ph



No old age for the soul

LOTUS POND

R. Valencia and S. Rosario

THE PASSAGE OF time makes us feel certain realities and we big truth. One sig- ing bodies.

Someone once said, "Aging makes us more down to earth. Things will eventually start to more —unclothed— from facial muscles to breasts. Keeping things up becomes a struggle."

Hollywood is the capital of show business—the center of man's fight against age. There is a "cure-all" to fight the natural process of aging through interventions like plastic surgery and cosmetics. Products are promoted as "anti-aging," "youth enhancing," or "body-building."

Laws of nature

Many advertisers spend lots of money to retain their youth. But, it's a losing battle. Nobody who takes man-made to control the laws of nature. The money we spent this vanity, the time and less time we become.

If we realize that each passing year makes our bodies older and less youthful, what do we do about it? Suppose takes the impossiness nature of the material body, and they seek the higher consciousness of the eternal. Why struggle over something that can't be saved?

Goal

Time is precious. Man's body is a valuable tool and is achieving the most his primary goal of existence. Individuals time.

Celebrities should know that time was a limit on youth. But the spirit soul—the person inside the material garment—is ageless and eternal.

There's no need to despair about getting older. A man feels happy with the knowledge that his true nature is eternal and purest of the Supreme. As a spiritual being, he inherently possesses knowledge and eternal beauty.

Inner beauty

Inner beauty, after all, comes from the spirit and truth is realized through its understanding.

There's no old age for the soul. Living according to our spiritual identity brings happiness and peace of mind. When we embrace the security of eternal life, we struggle with

"HAND-PO." Lilja Maria-Aurora's production about Chinup life has become a hit at home.

Politicians and artists don't mix

From page D1

finder production design and foreign locations have elevated our movie-going audiences.

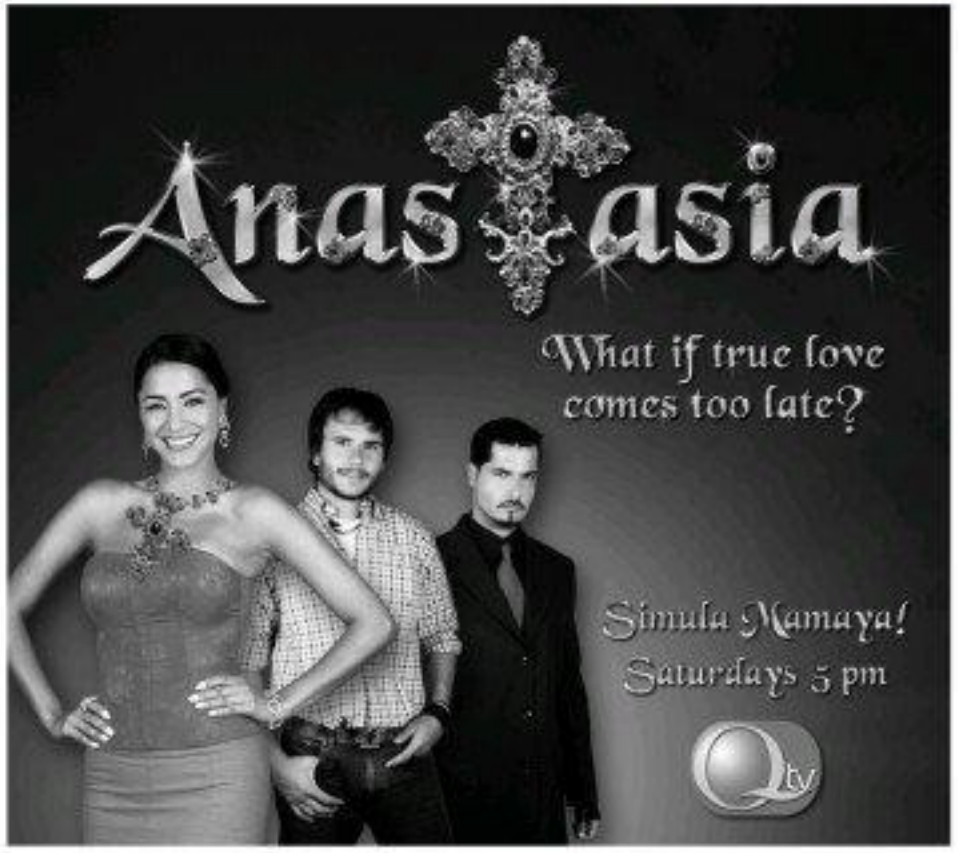
Controversy

Unfortunately, controversies have also become a staple of the MMFF. One instance was the controversy centered on the number of entries a producer could enter.

It's true the film fest is boosted not to a group of responsible, thinking, cultured workers who understand its real meaning, but they can learn from past mistakes.

Whatever's on top of the festival must resolve to uphold its artistic integrity, and to make sure that the goals is supported from the shelf. Yes, separate the politics from the artistic because, if I may quote Rudyard Kipling, "Never the twain shall meet."

SHERYL Cruz and Eula Caballero cracked up the "Tuyo" episode of "Shake, Rattle and Roll 8."



SATURDAY *Special*

SNEAK PREVIEW

'Dreamgirls' transcends limitations in rousing big-screen version

KNOWLES. Spunky but underwritten role for the pop queen.

By Nick P. Jocko

"Dreamgirls"
By Bill Condon
By Beyoncé Knowles, Jennifer Hudson, Eddie Murphy, Jamie Foxx

BILL CONDON'S BIG-SCREEN Adaptation of Tom Eyen and Henry Krieger's 1981 Broadway smash doesn't raise cheer in the hub theatrically of Ron Luhrmann's "Moulin Rouge" or the spectacular sequelchoreographic of Rob Marshall's "Chicago" (the screenplay for which Condon also wrote).

But, for all its shortcomings, here the musical's generally serviceable...and limiting...music is its redeemer: sung about a "new sound" and a "new social order," the fast-paced cinematic drama scores where Luhrmann and Marshall's otherwise dazzling productions were wanting. In magnificent singing, which is where Condon's movie derives its cinematic soul.

In fiction, fiction-mirror-for-fashion, the intriguing tale of one salesman-turned-talent manager and music mogul, Curtis Taylor Jr. (Jamie Foxx), and his Svengali-like mentor, James Thunder Earlie (in the thinly veiled story of The Supremes and Berry Gordy Jr., the visionary force behind the legendary Motown sound, who "ruthlessly" replaced the popular girl group's lead singer, Florence Ballard, with the prettier, thinner and more marketable Diana Ross...for crossover appeal. (Tragically, Ballard succumbed to complications of alcoholism and depression in 1976 at age 32.)

In the movie, The Dreams are composed of Deena Jones (Beyoncé Knowles), Lorrell Robinson (Anika Noni Rose), Michelle Morris (Sharon Leal), and Effie White (Jennifer Hudson, who bested 701 other screamers, including "American Idol" rival, Fantasia Barrino, for the role).

ROSE, KNOWLES AND HUDSON. Bringing well-loved musical to sizzling, soaring cinematic life.

The talented girl group—initially composed of Effie, Deena and Lorrell—is hired to ring backup for the heroin-snorting, skirt-chasing, James Brown-like soul singer, James Thunder Earlie (Eddie Murphy), after Taylor rigs a talent competition against the girls.

Soon after, the manipulative talent manager puts the Jones-Ballard-and-subservient Deena in the lead, and replaces the brilliant but difficult Effie ("I don't do backup, I don't do solos and slides"), she boldly declares) with Michelle. Will the undeniable Effie White suffer the same ignominy and bankruptcy as Ms Ballard?

Creative Writers/ "Gods and Monsters"-examiner the politics of stardom and the flesh-versus-celebrity debate that soon streaks Deena on the lows and highs of his stardom-starved protégée/mistress. Moreover, the insightful director injects social commentary about social issues and the irrelevance of war.

More than any aspect of his movie, however, it's the actors' finding and gutsy performances that make the production better than the material it's based on.

Despite his role's almost one-note character sketch, Foxx manages to clarify Taylor's selfish motivations. Rose and Leal likewise turn in delightful performances.

On the other hand, Murphy makes full use of his endorsic wit and comic edge to breathe life and magic into Earle's complex artistic nature.

For her part, Knowles's stunning, career-making turn is direct hit, and guaranteed to steal your heart. A star, indeed, is born! Of course, if you have simple sensibilities to go with your mode pipes, it's hard to go wrong with singing, lump-lacing numbers like "And I Am Telling You" and "I'm Changing."

Be forewarned, though: The jaw-dropping scenes that feature those crowd-pleasing songs will have you cheering and wondering, "Nominate who?"

To be fair, the beautiful and talented Beyoncé also delivers the goods. Unfortunately, Knowles' splendid, underwritten role is decorative at best. It's a relief then that, in one scene in expressive moment that ends up there with Hudson's scene-chewing "And I Am Telling You"), a soliloquy song, "Listen," is added to demonstrate the pop queen's vocal range and dramatic sensibility—a sparkling display of Beyoncé's most silver-sentimental charm skill.

Don't miss the movie...and see for the audio-visual thrill of watching four brave women (or some) lucky, when overlapping, reach to realize their cherished dreams.

Less predictable tracks in rock anthology

By Nestor Torre

IT'S NOT WHAT YOU'D CALL DEFINITIVE, but there are certainly more than a few interesting numbers in Warner Music's "Big Rock" anthology. With a 27-track playlist, the CD features singles from a variety of artists ranging from Green Day to The Flaming Lips.

Album opener is 1994 (Nominee) Bonnaroo's "Helena (So Long and Goodnight)," culled from the punk-pop quintet's sophomore album, "Three Chords for Sweet Revenge."

Ubiquitous

Released in 2000, it's a song that people are familiar with, though not as easily recognizable as their ubiquitous hit, "Welcome to the Black Parade."

"Helena" is followed by emo-rock Taking Back Sunday's "MakeDamGoes," a verse release culled from last year's "Lonely Nites." Running along positively the same emo-style (though with a more pop flavor) is the next track, "I Write Sins, Not Tragedies," from the Las Vegas-based group, Panic! at the Disco.

The playlist takes a less predictable turn in the fourth track with "Cash Machine," by the Begtile quartet, Hard 10. Hash-laden and sounding brand new, the song hearts reflected the bad effects of complaining yes and, as a consequence, sounds quite fresh.

Not so fresh

Not so fresh anymore are one-third of the songs, including Green Day's "American Idiot" (from the boys' Grammy-winning 2004 album), Maroon "Time is Running Out", Coldplay's "Clocks", Jimmy Eat World's "Bleed" and—believe it or not—Radiohead's "Personal Anthem," from the group's acclaimed 1997 album, "OK Computer."

It's a good thing that all these songs have the makings of a classic (the last, of course, is already considered one), so at least, it's not going to listen to them.

Similarly songs like The Killers' "Mr Brightside" and Godfather "Crazy" haven't been played as often on the radio, so their edge haven't yet been dulled out by over-familiarity.

Old material

Other seldom-heard tracks are Gnarls Barkley's "Crazy" and The Flaming Lips' "Yeah Yeah Yeah Song." The Gun Gun Dolls' "Stay With You," which comes from their eponymous album, "Let Love In," may still be considered new, but it sounds so much like the band's old material that it actually sounds dated.

The shows numbers in the lineup have likewise suffered from overexposure—like Kenny's "Somewhere Only We Know" and Daniel Powter's "Bad Day"—so they tend to blur into the background.

Thankfully, after being lulled by cooing tracks, "High" (James Blunt), and the albeit-mentioned "Stay With You" and "Bad Day" the collection ends with a bang, case of The Flaming Lips' quirky "Yeah Yeah Yeah Song."

THE FLAMING Lips' quirky can ends the genre album with a bang.

Better shows for children needed

By Hector U. Torre

FOR YEARS NOW, WE'VE BEEN urging producers to whip up good shows, films and albums for teenagers, simply because they comprise such a huge part of the country's demographic, and yet they've been largely passed up in favor of productions full of violence and sex.

Happily, productions for teens have been on the upswing on the small and big screens, so it's time to shift our focus to the equally important area of quality productions for children.

Since most shows are produced by adults, they don't engender the sense of wonder and imagination that we should foster in the country's very young viewers. More often, children are depicted on TV and in the movies as smug little adults who are forced on "crusher" or a much too early age.

There's a huge need for productions that depict children as children, and shows and movies that can do that imaginatively and entertainingly should benefit from parents and teachers' grateful support.

Local theater people's positive experience with his children's productions suggests that their TV and film counterparts will be similarly popular—provided they aren't sassy pre-teens and cynical, as is more usually the case.

A good example is the Australian kiddie show and act, "Hi-5." The happy group's performances and albums are acclaimed, and they are popular even in the United States.

"Hi-5." Group member Kathleen de Leon (center) is a Filipino-Australian.

Good values

It's interesting to point out that one of the group's members is a Filipino-Australian Kathleen de Leon. Like the group's other are singer-dancers, she makes it easy for the show's very young audience to learn and acquire good values.

It would be great if Ms Leon could visit Manila to work productions here how to come up with similar shows and acts, without being right of the special viewing needs of pre-school viewers.

Some years ago, good programming for children gave a boost with the production of such standout TV shows as "Bamboleria," "Ito nangunguna?" and "Palaro."

Alas, those shows are currently seen only on replay, in both aspects are definitely needed by the millions of Filipino kids who are often poorly served by the TV industry.

This is ironic, since advertising people know that producers for children are bestsellers, and that, quite often, it's the kids who persuade their parents to buy the products so unbearably plugged in TV commercials.

Viewing options

So, children should really get better viewing options, because it's their tender minds, hearts and heads that are doing the breakdown and advertising industries' commercial engine, at least so far as products for children are concerned.

If kids like the shows they view and their parents see that they're acquiring good values from viewing them, they will support those better shows, and the products advertised in them—and, everybody wins!

"RUSH HOUR" MEETS "THE PACIFIER"

JACKIE CHAN
ROB-B-HOOD

He walked into a robbery and ran off with a 30-million dollar baby.

OPENS JAN. 06

MTRCB PG-13

OPENS JANUARY 8

IN THE TRADITION OF "IF ONLY" & "A WALK TO REMEMBER" COMES ANOTHER MOVIE THAT TOUCHES THE HEART AND MAKES YOU BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF LOVE

LOVE NEVER DIES
IT IS STRONGER THAN DEATH

Dermont Mulroney
(star of "My Best Friend's Wedding" & "The Wedding Date")

Amanda Peet
(star of "A Lot Like Love")

Griffin & Phoenix

OPENS JANUARY 8

MTRCB R-13 STRICTLY FOR 13 YRS. OLD AND ABOVE

DJIMON HOUNSOU
BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR NOMINEE
BROADCAST FILM CRITICS AWARDS
BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR WINNER
NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW
BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR WINNER
WASHINGTON FILM CRITICS

BLOOD DIAMOND

MTRCB G ALL AGES ADMITTED

one boy... one dragon...
a world of adventure...

Based on the best-selling novel and the first chapter of the "Inheritance Trilogy", this epic fantasy-adventure centers on a young man named Eragon whose destiny is revealed with the help of a dragon. Eragon, now a Dragon Rider, is swept into a world of magic and power, discovering that he alone has the power to save - or destroy - an Empire.

eragon

OPENS JANUARY 8

Last...

Continued from page E2

Japanese author of the scientific world.

'House Murders'

Starting Jan. 12, Supernatural Philip, joined Angela Deem's Bailey's "Murder Mystery" at Orange, Greenbelt 1. Michael Gil, the play is directed by Michael Williams.

Carlo Aquino

Former child actor Carlo Aquino has established himself as a teenage champion of the first order.

Last year, his stirring performances in "Tilinday Pulang Singsing" and the "Dugsolan" episode on "Maalala Mo Kaya" on TV, and "Englishgirling Mula sa Cumbrian" on the big screen, won him both acclaim and awards (Golden Screen, Star Awards for TV).

Bent the hard and creative worker, Carlo hopes to build on these successes with even more notable efforts this year, paced by his new TV soap, "Maldita Ka Long Isa."

'Blessings in Dugsolan'

Get your copy of the third volume of Bach Science, subtitled Carson Tandoh's book, "Blessings in Dugsolan," a compilation of more than 200 inspiring, non-acidic articles about coping with bullies, lies, deep pulmonary and lowcaste.

It features the touching stories of celebrities and media personalities like Pepe and Benjamin Gonzalez, Ian Calinaldo, Esther, Princess Punzalan, Donita Rose and National Artist for Literature Alejandro Roces.

The book is available at Powerbooks, National Bookstore, the Philippine Bible Society and CBMP outlets. Call 687-1053 or 0906 5864394.

Movies on TV

On HBO today at 6 a.m., "Sleuth," Rotten at 7:45 a.m., "The Education of Little Tree," Jan. 8 at 9 p.m., "Broken Flowers," Jan. 9 at 1:30 p.m., "Twilight Zone, The Movie," Jan. 10 at 7 p.m., "Hell TV" Jan. 11 at 7 p.m., "Lords of Dogtown," Jan. 12 at 9 p.m., "Back to the Future 3."

On Cinemax, today at 9 p.m., "The School of Rock," Tomorrow at 7:30 a.m., "Bat Pupil," Jan. 6 at 10:15 p.m., "Cinde-22," Jan. 9 at 6 a.m., "Land of the Plenty," Jan. 10 at 11:45 a.m., "Carlito's Way," Jan. 12 at 2 p.m., "The Spider Grill."

AQUINO. Teenage champion of the first order.

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GALLERIA

1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3 • TYO
2 KASAL, KASALI KASALO
3 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
4 MANO PO 5
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
6 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
7 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
8 SUPER NOYPI
9 TKLONG BARKADA DEJA VU SNEAK PREVIEW
10 LIGALIG

ERMITA

1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 LIGALIG
3 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH DEJA VU SNEAK PREVIEW
4 MANO PO 5
5 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
6 KASAL, KASALI KASALO
7 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8

METRO EAST

1 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH DEJA VU SNEAK PREVIEW
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 KASAL, KASALI KASALO
4 SUPER NOYPI
5 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
6 MANO PO 5
7 LIGALIG
8 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8

NOVALICHES

1 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
2 SUPER NOYPI
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
4 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
5 MANO PO 5
6 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH / DEJA VU
7 LIGALIG
8 KASAL, KASALI KASALO

PIONEER

1 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA DEJA VU SNEAK PREVIEW
4 KASAL, KASALI KASALO

SNEAK PREVIEWS at all Robinsons Movieworld

january 6 & 7

STA. ROSA

1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 MANO PO 5
3 SUPER NOYPI / DEJA VU SNEAK PREVIEW
4 KASAL, KASALI KASALO
5 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8

LIPA

1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8 / DEJA VU
3 LIGALIG
4 KASAL, KASALI KASALO
5 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA

DASMARINAS

1 SUPER NOYPI
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
4 KASAL, KASALI KASALO
5 MANO PO 5 / DEJA VU SNEAK PREVIEW

ANGELES

1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 MANO PO 5
3 KASAL, KASALI KASALO
4 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8 DEJA VU

IMUS

1 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
2 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA / DEJA VU
3 MANO PO 5
4 SUPER NOYPI
5 LIGALIG
6 KASAL, KASALI KASALO

STARMILLS

1 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 SUPER NOYPI
4 MANO PO 5
5 LIGALIG / DEJA VU SNEAK PREVIEW
6 KASAL, KASALI KASALO

BACOLOD

1 MANO PO 5
2 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
3 KASAL, KASALI KASALO
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
5 LIGALIG
6 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH / DEJA VU

ILOILO

1 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
2 KASAL, KASALI KASALO
3 MANO PO 5
4 SUPER NOYPI / DEJA VU SNEAK
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
6 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8

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THE MOST AWAITED HORROR MOVIE OF THE YEAR
MAG-INGAT...MAKIRAMDAM...MATAKOT
RICA PERALEJO
ANGELICA PANGANIBAN
GRETCHEN BARRETTO
MATAKOT KA SA
KARMA

Last day for ManoMano sale

THE BIG SALE AT THE MANOMANO Fair Trade Center is on its last day. The handicraft store showcases the best and most creative decor products from all over the Philippines. ManoMano is at 2254 Lennox st., Sta. Ana, Manila (tel. 564-4150). It is operated by the Social Action Foundation for Rural and Urban Development Inc. (Sarduf).

HANDICRAFTS showcase in Sta. Ana, Manila is operated by Sarduf.

MONTAGE

'No Reservations'

Anthony Bourdain returns to Discovery Travel and Living with new episodes of "No Reservations," continuing his worldwide search for unique food cuisine and culture. Beginning Jan. 24, premiere episodes of the show air every Wednesday at 11 p.m., and encore on Sundays at 6 p.m. The Jan. 24 episode takes viewers to Sardinia.

'War of the Worlds'

On Jan. 27 at 9 p.m., HBO screens Steven Spielberg's sci-fi thriller "War of the Worlds," starring Tom Cruise and Dakota Fanning. The film version of H.G. Wells' seminal classic dramatizes the first strike in a catastrophic alien attack on Earth.

CRUISE AND FANNING. Tapdol Steven Spielberg's seminal sci-fi drama.

Triple platinum

"Kami ni APO Hitano," the tribute to the Apo Hiking Society by some of the country's leading bands and solo performers, has been certified triple platinum, and is the best-selling OPM album of 2006. The album of 18 songs is available on DVD and VCD.

THE APO retrospective is 2006's best-selling OPM album.

'Discovery Rewind 2006'

Discovery Channel journeys through last year's biggest scientific events and breakthroughs in "Discovery Rewind 2006," replayed at 8 p.m. tomorrow and 3 p.m. on Jan. 13. The program features commentary by experts from

LOOK 52

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MALL 5

1 HAGAL, HAGAL, HAGAL | 2 ENTING KABUSTE 3 | 3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL
4 SUPER NOYPI | 5 IGSALIG | 6 MANO PO 5

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AT THE CINEMAS

G1	1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 4	2 ENTING KABUSTE 3	3 MANO PO 5 : DEJA VU	4 HAGAL, HAGAL, HAGAL
G4	1 MATAGOT KA SA KARMA	2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 4	3 ENTING KABUSTE 3	
	4 ZIA ZIA ZAFURAHAN	5 SUPER NOYPI : DEJA VU	6	7 MANO PO 5
GB1	1 ENTING KABUSTE 3	2 HAGAL, HAGAL, HAGAL		
GB3	1 ENTING KABUSTE 3	2 HAGAL, HAGAL, HAGAL		
	3 ZIA ZIA ZAFURAHAN	4 MATAGOT KA SA KARMA : DEJA VU	5 MANO PO 5	
ATC	1 HAGAL, HAGAL, HAGAL	2 ENTING KABUSTE 3		
	3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 4	4 MATAGOT KA SA KARMA : DEJA VU	5 MANO PO 5	
ACC	1 ENTING KABUSTE 3	2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 4	3 HAGAL, HAGAL, HAGAL	4 MANO PO 5 : DEJA VU
M2	1 ENTING KABUSTE 3	2 MATAGOT KA SA KARMA		
	3 SUPER NOYPI : DEJA VU	4 HAGAL, HAGAL, HAGAL	5 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 4	

At the Activity Center

GLORIETTA	ALABANG TOWN CENTER
Agent 008 Movie Promo Tour January 7, 2007	Power Rangers Space Patrol Delta (SPD) Meet & Greet Event January 21, 2007
ATALA CENTER CEBU	MARKET! MARKET!
Centenary Celebration of Montessori Education January 6 to 7, 2007	Nestle Breakfast Cereals Event January 6 to 7, 2007

Greenbelt | Greenbelt 4 Sneak Peek presents Collection of Jared Pope January 10 to 21, 2007

Ortigas | Repertory Philippines presents MOVING MARGINS at REP's Onstage Theater – January 11 to 28, 2007 For inquiries, ph. call 687-4115

Ayala MUSEUM | Zero to 9 Contemporary Black Renewal: Journal Series Prints Until March 11, 2007 For inquiries, please call 757-7117 to 21 or visit www.ayalamuseum.org

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Tours, Leisure & Chow

Where to Stay Where to GO

A weekly directory of the country's best establishments

Lunch offerings at Crowne Plaza

SUNDAYS, WHEN TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE and getting from one place to another is hectic, it's always good to find great hunger-where one can conduct business in a quiet yet elegant surrounding, enjoy delicious food, get pampered with great service – and best of all, at a reasonable price. Crowne Plaza Galleria Manila's Ilin Tan Di Chinese restaurant promises all that with their new lunch buffet.

Executives and business people can now enjoy quick-to-prepare, yet delicious Lunch Set Menus for as low as P300++ per person. There are over 12 lunch combinations to choose from including Chinese specialties like Roast Duck with steamed Mihaon; Barbecue Spareribs with Veg-etable Dumplings; steamed Dim-sum Platter; Thin Puffs and Spring Rolls served with Broken Fried Rice and Soy Chicken with Tang Chow Fried Rice. All lunch combinations are served with a bowl of specialty soup to complete your meal.

If you and your associates are game for an adventurous dining experience, then the unlimited Dimsum Lunch Buffet would be an exciting treat. It's hard to beat with over 48 choices and an ongoing 3+1 promo at only P800++ per person! The Dimsum selections include sweet and savory items as well as scrumptious Hainese desserts to top it all off.

Crowne Plaza's Ilin Tan Di restaurant has gained recognition as one of the prominent Chinese restaurants in the Ortigas district. It is located at the 4th level of the hotel, with easy access to parking from the hotel's lobby or the adjacent Robinsons Galleria Mall. These lunch offerings are available everyday from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

For advance reservations and information, call 633-7222 or e-mail manila@ihgcrowneplaza.com. Crowne Plaza Galleria Manila is the newest luxury hotel in the Ortigas commercial and leisure hub, conveniently located at the corner of Ortigas and Meralco Avenues. Crowne Plaza is also a member of the world's largest hotel chain, the Intercontinental Hotel Group.

Starting the year right at Dusit Hotel

DUSIT HOTEL MANILA BELIEVES IN THE premise that indulgence makes the soul sing. This year, the hotel will stimulate your senses for the good life with enticing "treats" to welcome your neighbors.

Experience Asian hospitality at its finest at Dusit Hotel Makiki Dining as you a new line up of gastronomic offerings for January 2007.

The Café lets you discover culinary masterpieces to excite your discriminating tastes. The café's culinary maestro has created a wide array of fare in their extensive line-up of buffet selections that is all yours for only P950++ per person. As a special privilege for the hotel's regular patrons, every group of the persons availing of lunch or dinner buffet shall receive one complimentary buffet from The Café.

Excite your taste buds this January as Sunjaeyang with chef Tae's flavorful creations. Choose from five a la carte dishes offered from Jan. 17 to 31. Sample chef Tae's Gang Mun Sabal (deep-fried prawn wrapped in egg noodles) or the Makkae Ttae Tae Ttae (deep-fried egg plant stuffed with minced pork), among others.

The Japanese 'Weekend Buffet' has become a weekend ritual for gourmands as they visit Benkei to sample its wide array of choices. Sample the freshest sushi and sashimi to aficionado dishes of prawns and salmon, toppings, condiments, noodles, selection of soba and Japanese sweets for only P995++ per person. Kids ages 4 to 10 years old enjoy half the buffet rate. Benkei's weekend buffet is available from January to February 2007, every Saturday and Sunday, from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Enjoy a sampling of authentic Vietnamese cuisine at Thien Duong with chef Nguyen's Executive Set Menus for January 2007 specially created for busy executives. The dinner menu offerings consist of an appetizer, salad, soup, main course dishes, dessert (tea and dessert – a complete, fast, flavorful and healthy meal) for the executive on the go.

True to Fiesta fare Miguel's has to venture into classic Filipino favorites. For the month of January, the first "Bonus Bonanza" in the country features "Pilaitan na Manok" (roast chicken with a tasty, finger-licking sauce) – a new menu addition to complement Fiesta Sun Miguel's fresh brewed beer and to satisfy your craving for a hearty lunch or dinner. This savory chicken dish is priced at P420++ (good for 2 to 3 persons).

Start your year at Dusit Hotel Makiki and find Asian hospitality at its best. For more information or reservations, call 867-2333.

Congo Grille opens branch in Pampanga

SAN FERNANDO, CAMPAMPANGA – Congo Grille's authentic Filipino cuisine now is coming to Central Luzon as it opened its newest branch located at the SM City San Fernando in Pampanga.

The opening of the restaurant's 18th branch was part of its plan to expand to new outlets this year, to bring its unique kind of Filipino grilled chicken to Pinoys all over the country.

"With this new branch, we hope to share our one-of-a-kind taste to our Kapampangan diners. On top of our well-loved chicken, we will introduce new menu items that are sure to capture the discriminating taste of Kapampangan customers," said Rebecca Ramilla, Congo Grille San Fernando area manager.

Congo Grille has been known to revolutionize the grill restaurant concept by bringing outdoor style cooking inside its air-conditioned establishments. The store's San Fernando branch is no differ-ent, and customers can have their fill of Congo Grille's signature such as pork sisig, inihaw na pusit, kangkong ala guitan, crispy inihang, crispy pata, chicken liempo, aura lobby, lechon kawali, and barbecue chicken, all inside a cool, comfortable setting.

The great food and eye-catching interior are complemented by Congo Grille San Fernando's friendly and efficient staff, ready to assist and serve customers all day everyday.

Congo Grille San Fernando is located at the ground floor of the SM City San Fernando in Pampanga. For inquiries or reservations, call (045) 963-9760 to 63.

G Hotel Manila by Waterfront backed by Filipino excellence

BEGINNING G HOTEL MANILA by Waterfront opened its doors to the public to allow guests the experience another Waterfront excellence in the heart of Manila. Two months preparation was all it takes for the corporate management group of Waterfront Philippines Inc to open another hotel concept in the country. G hotel is a great example of a boutique hotel, which has gathered a large following in developed countries. Boutique hotels differentiate themselves from other conventional hotels based on the specifications of the property, but focusing on the unique brand offering where, in G Hotel Manila it is the money-free luxe personalized butler service.

G is for Great balance of style and substance that the property showcases in its very chic black and white lobby. everybody was stand when they entered G during its launching last Nov 17, 2006. G's lobby was inherited in black and white from the dinner in Café Sole, the hotel's coffee shop, to the last stop before they enter the elevators.

As the guests stepped out at the seventh floor where the main event was about to happen, they were welcomed by a desk of gold in the Promenade, the hotel's ball room, with a grand view of the night sky overlooking the Manila Bay.

"In deed, Waterfront Philippines Inc is the country's largest Filipino-owned and managed Civil chain hotel chain. It is the only hotel chain in the country that has presence in the key cities of the country: In Manila, it operates the Manila Pavilion Hotel and Casino and U Hotel Manila by Waterfront, in Cebu it operates the Waterfront Cebu City Hotel and Casino and the Waterfront Airport Hotel and Casino. Macau, while in Davao it is represented by the Waterfront Insular Hotel Davao.

For inquiries and reservations, please contact 522-0888, 887-0888 or e-mail marketing@waterfronthotels.com, g.hotel@waterfronthotels.com.

People, Events & Products

Fuji Xerox, Gawad Kalinga to put up Fuji Xerox Village

FUJI XEROX PHILIPPINES (FXP) TOGAWAD Kalinga company's business is a number leader in terms of sales, profits and market coverage. The company also is a number leader in terms of its top-contribution for many years. However, FXP's commitment to excellence doesn't end with its business accomplishment as a proud leader in the industry.

A community in Pangasinan Village in Montalban Rizal will be converted into the Fuji Xerox Village. Some 50 families will move from barrio structures with FXP and its partners Friends and Rotary Club of Makati West, abandoning the exposure and breathing cubicle, to live the FXP's initial construction project which was approved by the foundation board to support the building of 20 houses, a total value of about 1 million.

Fuji Xerox has always been active in terms of extending assistance to various sectors of the country, in fact, an integral part of the corporation, the Fuji Xerox Foundation was established for this purpose. According to FXP president Henry Jovanes, their assistance division lawyer Clara Carmen introduced GK's vision of building from to building from scratch.

According to Jovanes, the vision of what Pangasinan Village will be is a vision of what the whole Philippines can become if every class sector is transformed into a beautiful, peaceful community. He declared by saying "we can give hope to our brothers and sisters, the positive transformation of our communities, our society, our country. Allow us a second transparency."

LINKS RING the from separate are Tagaytay City Mayor Freddie Tiangco, GK international coordinator Dylan Wilk, FXP president and CEO Foundation of the Philippines Inc. board of trustee Henry Jovanes, FXP VP corporate services and FXP board of trustee John Chotto, FXP finance and FXP board of trustee Filomon Tejada, chairman board of Couples for Christ Jun Santos, and GK Foundation of the Philippines inc. director lawyer Clara Carmen.